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# AN HIGHWAY THERE

BY

WILLIAM CAMPBELL SCOFIELD

*"The Holy Spirit in the New Testament," "The Bible History  
of Answered Prayer."*



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"It may be glorious to write  
Thoughts that shall glad the two or three  
High souls, like those far stars that come in sight  
Once in a century;

"But better far it is to speak  
One simple word, which now and then  
Shall waken their free nature in the weak  
And friendless sons of men;

"To write some earnest verse or line,  
Which seeking not the praise of art,  
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine  
In the untutored heart." —*Lowell*



## PREFACE

To those familiar with the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, the title of this volume will indicate its design. The controlling thought suggested by the words, "The wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein," will be the *plainness* of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The presumption is that whatever the wisdom and compassion of God have devised for the salvation of men—men of all grades of intellect and all stages of culture, of all depths of debasement and all degrees of guilt—must not lack the element of plainness. To such as are inquiring eagerly, "What must I do to be saved?" it would be a sheer aggravation of their misery to leave them in doubt as to the saving process.

True, any attempt to let in the light on this subject will be unsuccessful, except as the Holy Spirit sheds forth His illumination on him who reads as well as on him who writes; but that illumination is promised, and will be invoked at every stage.

## *PREFACE*

It would be presumption for any one man to think he was commissioned to write all that could be written on such a subject. It is only what is revealed to himself that he is charged to communicate to others. He is to let *his* light shine.

A sevenfold, sevenfolded treatment is adopted, partly for the sake of convenience, and partly because the number is itself suggestive of what, in the expansion of thought, may be limitless. It suggests "a broader view" of the subject-matter of the book—a seventy times seven possibility.

*Washington, D. C.*



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## THE HIGHWAY

1. The Laying Out
2. The Way=Marking
3. Its Conspicuousness
4. A Public Convenience
5. A Governmental Affair
6. The Safe=Guarding
7. The Goings Established



2

# AN HIGHWAY THERE

## I

### THE HIGHWAY

The analogy between this and every principal highway is so close as to promote clear views of its leading characteristics.

1. Every highway is *laid out* as such in conformity with a well digested plan; and, being once laid out and opened, it cannot be closed so long as the necessity for it remains. From one generation to another the entrance to and the exit from it must be left open to all who would pass over it, subject only to such restrictions as safety requires of all wayfarers.

The laying out is always a serious matter, requiring oftentimes the overcoming of great obstructions, and the harmonizing of many conflicting interests.

The necessity for the way, the route most feasible, and the one wherein will be secured the the greatest benefit to the largest number, the assessment of costs upon the parties to be bene-

fited and their ability and willingness to pay the same, are matters requiring the most careful and intelligent consideration. Hence, in this service, there is a demand for the soundest judgment, the highest engineering skill, and the most painstaking and patient working out of all essential details as to plans, specifications and estimates.

All these things must needs have been taken into account, in laying out the highway over which the ransomed of the Lord shall pass, "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

The *plan* of this highway is as old as the human race, nay, older than that. "Before the foundation of the world," it was in the mind of God as a part of His matured *purpose*, which embraced the greatest possible good to the largest number, and the ability and willingness to pay the infinite bill of costs.

Nothing was left to chance. The original plan covered all details, and secured every needed adjustment. It provided for all contingencies, and the overcoming of every possible obstruction. And, being once opened to the race, it can never be closed so long as a single member of that race desires to walk therein.

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."

2. A highway is so *well defined* as to distinguish it from all other ways.

There must be, to one who would go right on his way, no liability of mistaking that way. There must be sure indices on every stage thereof, which he who runs may read. If, as it respects this highway, it be true that there is "none other name, given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved," then, surely, there must be certain landmarks discoverable to the feeblest intellect. It must even be possible that a little child should come to know the way, and be competent to lead others therein.

This proposition is not invalidated by the admitted fact that some who are supposed to know, and are set to show the way, do actually "darken counsel by words without knowledge," and so prove themselves to be "blind leaders of the blind."

Unless their representations as to the plainness of the way tally with those of the inspired Word, it is almost certain they are among those who have run without being sent of God, and that, consequently, their call to this ministry is

subject to challenge. The ascertainment of the landmarks of this way is never to be lost sight of as we advance.

3. Every highway, and more especially this one, is *conspicuous*. It can be seen from afar. Never would it have been written, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides Me there is no Savior," or, "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God," if there was any locality so remote from the way that it could not be discovered.

Nor yet is there any condition, however widely separated as to its moral status from that of a holy, sin-hating God, even though it be that of "the chief of sinners, a blasphemer and persecutor," that cannot discern through the mists of ignorance and guilt this highway; not one who can say with truth, "To look I cannot: I am too far gone in sin, too prone to evil ways, to believe, that, even if I looked, there could be any saving change wrought in me." Such a condition, by reason of its very desperateness, is that about which cluster the most wonderful and gracious revealings of God's Word. There fits into it that parable of our Lord, which not only discloses to us the prodigal in the far country wast-

ing his substance with riotous living, but that same prodigal, coming to himself, arising and going to his father with sincerest penitence, and being met by that father while he is yet a great way off with rapturous joy.

No one shall any more say after such a word-painting, that this highway is left obscure, even to the far away prodigal. And such an one ought, even though he will not respond to such an object lesson: "From the ends of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

4. An highway is always for the *public*—the people at large. It is understood to be a public convenience, and is, therefore, as much for the accommodation of one person as another, for the masses as for the classes, for the poor as for the rich. Especially is this true of the highway under consideration. An invitation in the words, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," cannot be narrowed in its scope to a few favored mortals. If any should hesitate to accept such an invitation on the ground that it was antiquated—an Old Testament outgiving—then what will they say

to the affirmations that Christ is "a ransom for many," and that He "tasted death for every man"? And what will they say to Christ's own words—the last on record, the words which complete that record: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"?

Surely, there is nothing that would give fuller assurance that this way is for all mankind.

5. Every highway is presumably a *governmental* institution, and so is under governmental supervision and control. It is the king's highway. All proprietary rights are vested in him as the head of the government.

In this case the Lord Jehovah is King. He makes Himself responsible for the highway of holiness, and for its wise control. He has made proclamation of His exclusive proprietary rights, saying: "I am God and besides me there is no Savior." And it is quite insupposable that through any oversight of His, this way will be found at any time out of condition.

6. Consequently, an highway under governmental control is supposed to have the further characteristic of *safety*.


It is understood, that whenever such a way is opened to the public, the government assumes all risks in behalf of whosoever enters and keeps the way, insuring them against any damage incurred through faulty construction or inadequate supervision. Persons traveling on any other than a highway have no assurance of safety.

The moment they see written over the entrance to any way, "This is not a public way—Dangerous!" they understand that if they enter that way they do so at their own risk.

So, as it respects this highway, God is under solemn engagements, not only to keep it in good repair, but to keep it properly *policed*. He makes Himself responsible for the security of those who pass over it, trusting in His protecting power. Hence it is written: "No lion or ravenous beast shall go up thereon."

But that is not the only peril to be encountered on a highway not properly policed. There was something quite as much dreaded by the people of the East as a lion or ravenous beast, *viz.*, the contamination of some dreadful disease.

Hence the strictest quarantine regulations were enforced in fending off this peril from the ordinary wayfarer. Wherefore it is written





again of this highway: "The *unclean* shall not pass over it"—not those unclean as to some bodily ailment, but those diseased of *sin*, a soul-malady more to be dreaded than leprosy or any other physical disorder. No one defiled with sin can by any possibility enter upon this way. The police arrangement is absolutely prohibitory as to all who have not experienced "the washing of regeneration," and a "cleansing from all unrighteousness"—a cleansing that makes its subject "whiter than snow." And whatever is prohibited at the beginning is always prohibited. The safety of those in this way requires that its reputation in this respect should be maintained. There must be no fear of contamination from association with the foul in heart or life.

If it should be alleged, that, judging from appearances, there be many, who having entered upon this way have experienced a frightful relapse and of whom it may be affirmed that their "last state is worse than the first," our reply is, that such relapse is the result of stepping down and out of the way.

And this fact suggests yet another feature of every highway, and especially of this one, *viz.*,

7. Provision made by laws, statutes, ordi-

nances, and otherwise, for *establishing the goings* of those who have entered on the way with honest intent. If there are dangerous places where any slight divergence from the straight path would plunge into a treacherous morass, or down a frightful precipice, these places would be railed in, while the red light signal would be displayed.

The ransomed of the Lord would find but little comfort as they journey toward the celestial city, unless they had some assurance that they would be enabled to hold on their way. It is the *staying* quality—the enduring unto the end—that is the determining fact. To be ransomed at a great price, and then presently to be brought into captivity, once, twice, thrice—nay, any number of times—that cannot be thought of with composure. There must be a keeping by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. He who has paid the great ransom, must be able to keep from falling, and present before the presence of His glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. As the ransomed go forward in this way, they step with a firmer, steadier tread, and are more and more established in righteousness. It is more difficult to seduce them into sinful compliances. They shudder

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at the thought of being brought again under bondage to sinful habit, of sliding back into the horrible pit from which their feet have been rescued. Their salvation is nearer at any given juncture than when they first believed. They think, and not without reason, that their light may shine more and more unto the perfect day.

The Psalmist (Ps. 40: 1- ) gives us a bit of his experience in the words: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings."

A similar experience is possible to all who wait patiently on the Lord. And a very blessed experience it is, and we wonder not, when, like the Psalmist, they can add this testimony also: "And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

## THE RANSOM

1. The State of Sin
2. The Moral Impotence
3. The Ransomer
4. The Price Paid
5. The Adequacy Thereof
6. The Holy Spirit
7. The Act of Faith

2

## II

### THE RANSOM

Ransom is the price paid for redemption from captivity, enslavement or penalty.

But is there *need* of ransom for any considerable number of the human family? To determine this question it will be required to consider but two phases of the situation, *viz.*, *the State of sin*, and *the moral impotence of that state*.

The Scriptures sum up the whole case in the words following: "There is none righteous, no, not one: . . . They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. . . . There is no fear of God before their eyes."

1. For proof of the state of sin as thus set forth in Scripture phrase, let the balances be suspended. Let all appropriate tests of character be applied, and let the results be tabulated.

(a) First, in order of time and serviceableness, is the balance of *conscience*.

It is not essential to our purpose that we

should attempt to define this faculty, if faculty it may be called—this *something* which wakens to activity with the first dawning of moral accountability, and is ready, as occasion may require, either to accuse or excuse.

In his first moral act, every man steps into this balance, and is weighed. By as much as his conscience *accuses* him, by so much does he fall short of the required standard. And what happens at the beginning is happening all along through life. Conscience is keeping its score against every man who violates it. It was the waking of Belshazzar's slumbering conscience—a waking that neither the fumes of the wine cup, nor the exhilaration of the great feast could prevent—that caused his cheeks to blanch as the fingers of a man's hand came forth and wrote upon the plaster of the wall. The element of mystery has nothing in it to appall an innocent man. Guilt it is that causes us to suspect that the hand-writing upon the wall bodes something of evil to us.

(b) The balance of a man's *own judgment*—the decisions he pronounces as to what is right and wrong in the abstract, or as seen in the conduct of others—is second only in importance. That which he allows to be wrong in the conduct

of a fellow man, that which he condemns in him must be reprehensible in himself. "Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

But where is the man who from the beginning has experienced this blessedness, who has always avoided doing the thing which he denounces as a wrong or an inconsistency in other men? A man's recorded opinions on any subject are apt to be quoted against him with singular effect if ever he apostasizes therefrom. More than anything else he dreads to be brought face to face with his own record under such circumstances; for that record operates as a sentence out of his own mouth to the severity of which he can take no exception.

David found he had unwittingly stepped into this balance when his wrath was greatly kindled against the man, who, in the case supposed by Nathan, had been guilty of a terrible injustice against his fellow, and he declared: "As the Lord liveth, the man that has done this thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." The prophet's unflinching fidelity in pointing him out as the man, who, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite,



who has made and broken them. And who has not a long array of such witnesses to encounter -- an array none the less formidable for the sincerity accompanying the making or the regrets following the breaking?

Impulsive Peter denying his Lord with oaths and curses, needed only to meet the sorrowful look of the one he had so deeply wronged, to be reminded of the words still warm upon his lips, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." There was no occasion for any one to inform him, as he went out weeping bitterly, that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

The man who is solemnly pledged to a life of sobriety, as the friendly hand lifts him once more from the gutter, needs no other reminder that he has been weighed in the balance and found wanting than the broken pledge to which his signature is attached. The man who has resolved only to lead a better life, as also he who has proposed to lead a religious life -- a life of prayer and consecration to the service of God -- will, ere long, find that he has fallen far below the standard he himself had fixed.

(c) Let the balance of *truth* be suspended, and weigh character in that.



What is truth? And what does truth require? When is a man true to his own convictions? When does he say just what he knows to be in accordance with the facts revealed to his intelligence? Does he not prevaricate when he states what is a part of his own experience—what he thinks, and how he feels on religious subjects? Does he ingenuously confess that he is sometimes troubled and anxious, that he fears for the future, that he is burdened with a sense of sin, and is secretly inquiring after the way of life? Without truth in the inward parts how surely will the settling of the balance indicate his moral deficiencies.

But it is the truth contained in the Holy Scriptures that is the surest test. They are God's balance, and, willing or unwilling, every man to whom they are accessible must be weighed in them. And what they reveal is subject to no revision or reversal. From them the recording angel makes up his statistics for the great assize. And who ever came forth from this balance at all satisfied with himself? Who ever came forth from it without an oppressive sense of moral emptiness and ill-desert? Who ever came forth from it without abhorring himself? The Word of God, living, powerful,

sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, ah, what a balance it is!

(f) But there is a balance within a balance, *viz.*, the *law* of God, as expressed in the Scriptures—the written law of His Kingdom, a fuller revelation of the law written in the heart. “The law of the Lord is perfect,” a moral code without flaw. All modes of action that do not conform to law are wrong and injurious. Conformity or nonconformity to law determines character. The extent of conformity measures accurately the moral status. The man who is wholly conformed to the requirements of law is a perfect man.

Weighed in this balance, who is not found wanting? We are a race of confessed law-breakers. “If we say that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

It is utterly impossible that any man should escape out of this balance. Law is on every side of him. It envelopes him like an atmosphere. It presses its claims upon him with an urgency that is never relaxed. His every violation of it goes upon the record. *Violated law*

has its reprisals. It metes out punishment to the lawbreaker. He suffers, and suffering traces in indelible characters its history upon his soul. Society suffers. A leaven of mischief is put into its lump. "One sinner destroyeth much good," and the good destroyed will go into the balance-sheet of the sinner's account with law.

(g) The balance of the *Gospel*.

With no fanciful notions of what the Gospel requires, who of us has come up to its standard? Who has not fallen far below it in almost, if not quite every particular? "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and every worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world," it presents us the example of one who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," and bids us follow Him.

Now, who of us has been so like Him, that our acquaintances have said: "He has been with Jesus, and has learned of Him"? As to the measure of faith required by the Gospel, who has not felt himself worthy of rebuke for his unbelief? As to the matter of self-denial, of weanedness from the world, of setting the affections on things above, of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, who of

us has not fallen far short of his own conception of what the Gospel requires in all these particulars? In the matter of loving our neighbor as ourselves, or of laying down our lives for the brethren, who has met the demand? Weighed in the balance of the Gospel, who has not been found wanting? Perfection on the earth! And where will you find it? Who claims it for himself? Who concedes it to his fellow?

It is impossible but that every man should be in the balances. His very nature puts him there and holds him there. If the balances have made a true record, then, it is utterly impossible but that every man has run up a fearful score against himself. There is a long list of shortcomings and imperfections in the reckoning kept from day to day of his misconduct. And what can he possibly do with such a record? A question of greater seriousness could not be asked.

Certainly too much is already found wanting to encourage the hope of bringing the balance to an equipoise. Cast into it henceforth all moralities, honesties, good deeds of whatever kind, and still the score is greatly against us.

Manifestly, the lack in the balance must be supplied by the merit of another, or we are for-

ever undone. And that merit must be found in one who, weighed in every conceivable balance, has been found wanting in nothing. In our account with God there is no other possible mode of arriving at a friendly adjustment—no other mode of becoming reconciled to Him.

In other words, there must be found a *ransom*, or we perish in our sins, the victims of our own voluntary and inexcusable defection from the way of righteousness.

2. The second phase of this situation is, *The moral impotence* of all who are in the state of sin, or, *man's moral inability to extricate himself therefrom*. This moral impotence is vividly set forth in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The expansion of his thought is all that will be attempted, and is probably all the case requires. The delineation is as follows:

In his lapsed estate man is "*sold under sin*"—a species of mortgage sale. Maybe the apostle had in mind the custom prevalent among the Israelites, of selling one's self for a period of service at a stipulated price, varying according as the interval between the date of sale and the year of Jubilee was longer or shorter. In some sense this was a *voluntary*, though an unwelcome expedient to one whose reduced circum-

stances left him no other mode of satisfying the creditor, whose claims had come to maturity.

*Sold under sin!* By his own act—of necessity a *free act*—man becomes a *servant* of sin. This is as true of the last as of the first man who sins. With an amount of intelligence that renders him responsible for what he does, he consents, for the pleasure held out as the inducement, to transgress the law, doing what he knows he ought not to do, so putting himself, for the time, under the dominion of sin.

Now, when he would cease from sin, this tyrant exhibits the bill of sale. It is as much as if he should say, "You have covenanted with me of which these presents are proof, and I shall hold you to your covenant. Know ye not, that, to whom you yield yourself a servant to obey, his servant you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? You have yielded yourself to be my servant, have had your guilty pleasure, and are from henceforth in my power. Escape, you may not with my consent."

The victim may reply: "You are taking an undue advantage of me: I never intended that the covenant should be eternal: I will not be holden of it: I will emancipate myself from

this guilty environment: I am already sick of sin; the pleasure you promised me as an inducement to take of the forbidden fruit, has proved as the apples of Sodom. I will serve you no more."

A fierce struggle now begins. But the law in the members—the law of sin entrenched there—proves stronger than "the law of the mind," and the mortgage holds.

Gladly would he give a large bonus for a release from the hard bargain, but the tyrant is inexorable. He makes the chains of sinful habit heavier. He crushes out the soul's hopefulness by a succession of humiliating discomfitures.

"*That which I do I allow not.*" "I am sorry I did it. I wish I had done the other thing instead. I will do differently next time." But the next time he does just the same thing; and again passes through a succession of remorseful experiences.

But not only does he do what he disapproves—he does what he detests. "What I *hate* that do I." Things, the doing of which he unsparingly condemns in others, and abhors himself for doing, he nevertheless continues doing, the temptation to do them, through the sudden ex-

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citement of the evil propensity and the enervating effects of past indulgence, proving stronger than the resolve not to do them.

Indeed, so completely is he under the power of sin, that his very identity seems to be lost. "*It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*" Sin—the tyrant, having complete control—does his pleasure regardless of his guilty thrall's wishes or resolves. He treats him as if he had no rights he was bound to respect. Resistance only makes matters worse. The more he struggles, the more completely does he become entangled in the meshes of transgression.

Such is a faint representation of the condition of a soul under the dominion of the law of sin in the members.

The way out of this guilty environment is a problem submitted to the race, and its solution has been found to be one of vast difficulty—a problem, which in fact, the race itself has never been able to solve.

3. The necessity of a ransom being conceded, it is next in order to inquire as to the *price* paid, the *denomination* in which it is paid, and the *party* paying it.

Reversing the order of this threefold inquiry

we have God not only claiming the right of discovery, saying, "*I have found out a ransom,*" but also affirming, that all the expense incurred in working out the redemptive scheme was borne by Himself alone. "*A just God and a Savior; there is none beside me.*"

Pass now to consider the price paid in the ransom, and the denomination in which it was paid.

The entire ground of this part of our discussion is covered by the single statement: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3: 16, 17.)

If we concede the validity of God's claim that besides Him there is no Savior, then it must follow that all others are necessarily excluded from participation in the great transaction. Least of all could the subject of ransom take any credit to himself for what has been done in his behalf. Hence it is written: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight."

There are but three supposable processes by which justification after transgression might be secured. These are:

(1) By *an act of God*, declaring the sinner right according to law;

(2) By a *remission of penalty*.

(3) By some *satisfaction* rendered by the sinner himself to the law's demands.

(1) Can God declare the sinner just, when he is not? As impossible as it is for Him to lie, so impossible is it that He should declare the sinner right according to law when He knows, and the sinner himself knows, and every other intelligent being knows that he has broken the law. And yet, if God should make such a declaration, the fact itself would remain unchanged; the transgressor is a transgressor still.

(2) Can the penalty of a righteous law be remitted? The law is demanded by the nature and relations of moral beings. Their happiness is contingent upon its enforcement. To give up the law is to abandon the only means by which the good of such beings can be conserved and promoted. If then God should abrogate the law by remitting its penalty—there being no law without a penalty—He would be responsible for the misery of His subjects.

(3) But can He not on condition of the sinner's *repentance* remit the penalty, and treat him as if he were innocent? Not under a sys-

tem of law. The law says nothing about repentance. It contemplates simply obedience and disobedience, reward and penalty. Who ever heard of a law with the provision in it, that if a man repented after transgression he should escape punishment?

What would be the value of any human government as a defense against violence and crime, if it were understood that that government had lodged in its executive, the authority to pardon any criminal on condition of repentance? Under such a government who would be restrained from crime through fear of the law? A proclamation to that effect, issued by any such government, would soon destroy all its authority. Who would live under such a government?

The case would be the same under the government of God. If, then, the moral law is to have any binding force, if God as the executor of that law is to retain His authority, He must not suffer the sinner to escape on the ground of his repentance.

But those who urge repentance as the ground of justification, assume that the sinner would repent under a purely legal system. There is not the slightest evidence that the law, pure and

simple—the law proclaimed without any offer of mercy—has any such tendency, but the contrary. “When the commandment came *sin revived*.”

Under a purely legal system, therefore, there is no probability that God would ever be called on to remit the penalty of the law on the ground of repentance.

But, admitting that he does repent, and that his repentance is sincere, what is there in the nature of repentance that the sinner can plead as a ground for his justification?

In a word, repentance implies sorrow for sin, an acknowledgement of God's justice in its punishment, a pledge of future obedience, and actual reformation.

But these things, however proper in themselves, do not reduce the degree of guilt already incurred. Will his sorrow for sin make it cease to be sin? Will the confession of guilt render him guiltless? Will his assent to the justice of the penalty make it unjust? Will his good resolutions or his actual reformation efface sin's dark stains from his soul?

Can the sinner by future good behavior make atonement for his sin?

That depends upon another question, *viz.*, whether he can at any future time do more than

obey the law perfectly? The law demands always, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Can any one, at any time, do more than love with all his heart, soul, mind, strength? Though from this time forth he should keep the law perfectly, yet has he done no more than it was his duty to do.

How obvious then is it that he who is the subject of ransom, must of necessity be excluded from all participation in its payment. Most significant are these words of the apostle: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, . . . that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 24-26.)

4. And this brings us definitely to the *price* paid in the ransom, and the *denomination* in which it was paid.

"Redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained

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before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times," etc. (1 Pet. 1:18-21.)

There can be no honest mistake, in view of this testimony, as to what God found *must* be paid, and as to what He actually *did* pay in the nature of ransom.


On this subject He left not Himself without a witness, from the Fall to the Flood and from the Flood to the Sacrifice on Calvary. The intent of all sacrifices, from that of Abel, who brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof an offering unto the Lord, was to show that "without shedding of blood is no remission."

For the elucidation of what may be regarded as the Bible doctrine on this feature of the case, alike under both economies, take this: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the *blood* that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. 17:11.) Directions in full had been given respecting the authorized mode of making atonement, in which the mingled blood of a bullock and a goat was put upon the horns of the altar, and sprinkled seven times upon the altar itself. In view of the sacredness of the purpose to which the

blood of the animal was thus devoted, there arose the necessity of interdicting under the severest penalty the use of blood as an article of food. "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among you that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among the people."

Then follows the reason for the statute in words which answer directly and fully, though incidentally, the most important inquiries that have ever been raised respecting the basic theme of the Gospel.

There is no attempt to prove the necessity of an atonement for the soul. It is taken for granted that all men feel their need of some gracious expedient, whereby they may escape the merited punishment of their sins. The provisions of a law, to which the death penalty is annexed, have been violated; and that law must needs be upheld and made honorable, either by inflicting its exact penalty upon the transgressor or by the substitution of a certain amount of suffering, voluntarily endured by some innocent being, which would be accepted by the lawgiver as the *equivalent* of the penalty





—suspending its operation as against all who humbly confess their sins, and embrace the offer of a gratuitous pardon.

That the exact penalty of the law had not been visited upon the transgressor was manifest. That a substitute such as the law required had been provided, was the general, though not very well defined impression, which, in the minds of all truly religious men, became a matter of faith, and had found its appropriate outward expression in sacrifices for sin. All acceptable worship from the beginning, had been accompanied by this token of the worshipper's belief in the doctrine of atonement as the soul's necessity. The rejection of this doctrine was deemed the worst form of infidelity, and was signally rebuked at its first attempt to supersede the true worship of Jehovah by offering unto Him of the fruit of the ground, instead of the firstling of the flock.

*What* is accepted of God in place of a sinner's suffering the penalty of the law he has violated—the essence of the atonement or the denomination in which the ransom was paid—is not left in doubt.


*"It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."* The blood, and nothing else, has

God given upon the altar for that purpose.

For an offense that did not involve the soul in mortal guilt—for a mere mistake, there might be some satisfaction other than blood. A humble apology, or a self-imposed penance might be deemed a sufficient satisfaction for such an offense. But when God's law as revealed to the understanding, is sinned against, then nothing but blood can be accepted as an atonement. The soul is now in jeopardy. The death penalty has been pronounced upon it, and it must be redeemed by blood or go unredeemed.

But *why* blood? "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood.*" If a soul is to be rescued from its exposure to the death penalty, what could have been more fitly chosen for the purpose than a sacrifice which should involve the shedding of blood, or the violent taking away of life? 'Tis meet that the ransom offered for sin, should be the same *in kind* as the penalty which the law prescribes. If that penalty is death, let the life of the substitute pay the forfeit.

If it be deemed expedient to defer the offering up of the real sacrifice, and prepare the minds of men for that transaction by some impressive rite, then let the life of an animal victim be taken away—let the blood of slain beasts



be sprinkled upon the altar without intermission until the fullness of time is come. And, when He appears who is to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," let it be understood, that He has "given His life a ransom for many," and that "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

It could never have been thought that the blood of slain beasts had in itself any value as an atonement for the soul. It was only as a type that such blood had significance. It foreshadowed the atonement, but was not the atonement itself. The blood of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, was the equivalent of the law's demand which God accepted. To some it may seem hardly necessary, that reference should be made to the abundant testimony in support of the proposition that it is the blood of Christ that maketh an atonement for the soul; but, in a matter of such vital moment, it is safer to verify the proposition.

We, therefore, give without comment, a few of the more direct and positive New Testament teachings on this subject:

"In whom we have *redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*"

"If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the

ashes of an heifer sanctifieth, how much more shall *the blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God . . . that by means of *death*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal life."

"But now once in the end of the world, hath He appeared to put away sin by *the sacrifice of Himself*."

"According as He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. . . . *In whom we have redemption through His blood*."

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us*; much more, then, being now *justified by His blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, . . . but *with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb slain before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times*."

Surely, from a Scriptural standpoint, nothing could be made plainer than that the ransom from the guilt of sin has been paid in the blood of Christ.

5. It must be that so costly a ransom is entirely *adequate*; otherwise it would represent a vast waste of compassion. In its practical efficiency the ransom must be all it purports to be, and it must meet the exigency. Nothing in such a matter is satisfactory that is inadequate. Though, as an expression of the divine pity and in the costliness of its provisions nothing were wanting, yet, if it lifted men well-nigh out of the horrible pit, and then let them, through sheer inability to do more, drop back again; if it saved almost, but to plunge into a deeper damnation; if those who had been redeemed were nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, then might we be at a loss to discover wherein consisted the value of the benefit conferred.

The adequacy of the ransom must be subjected to a threefold test:

(1) It must be something more than a scheme of pardon. There must indeed be pardon if there is ransom from penalty. But if pardon is followed immediately by transgression, if the power to cease from sin is not in some way connected with the act of pardon, how small the advantage.


A thousand pardons would not save a soul from perdition, if its sinful nature had not

undergone a transformation. A thousand pardons would not fit a soul for heaven. Ransom must involve regeneration, or it is inadequate. We *must* be born again—"born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And such a birth is inseparably connected with the ransom. It pardons the past to the intent that it may the more surely save from the offenses that necessitate pardon. It saves from sinning. It keeps from falling, and presents faultless before the presence of the divine glory.

(2) There must also be the provisions made for all mankind in the scheme of ransom, in order that its adequacy may go unchallenged. Hence Christ is "the propitiation for the sins of the *whole* world." "He tasted death for *every man*."

(3) Moreover, the ransom to be adequate must be enduring. And so it is. "He that believeth on the Son *hath eternal life*." The water given him of Christ is in him a well of water springing up *into eternal life*.

6. God having found out and having paid, wholly, at His own expense, an adequate ransom, what remained for Him to do, but to secure its acceptance by the parties in whose



interest the ransom had been found and paid. And to that end, measures must be taken to enlighten and persuade. It must be made possible, that the dullest intellect of all who would avail themselves of the benefits of the ransom, should be able to comprehend all that is essential to his escape from the guilt and disabilities of his lost estate.

How could it be evidenced that Christ was the true light, except as He lighted every man that cometh into the world, or how could His own declaration, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me," be established, save as some provision was made for the *drawing*? Hence it was, that when Christ had fulfilled His mission the Holy Spirit was sent from the Father.

What Christ Himself did for the two perplexed and sorrowing disciples, as He walked with them toward Emmaus after His resurrection—"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, and expounding unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself"—the Holy Spirit was commissioned to do and has been doing ever since, with results equally satisfactory.

But, in order to the effectiveness of the ran-


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som, something more is needed than enlightenment. Strange as it may seem, there is a reluctance on the part of men to accept on the terms God proposes, the offer of ransom. Christ Himself had occasion to say, "*Ye will not come unto Me that ye may have life.*" "*How often would I have gathered you, but ye would not.*" To overcome the indifference, the reluctance, the stout resistance of sinful men to the scheme of ransom through Jesus Christ, there was need for the interposition of the wisest, the most persuasive, the most powerfully constraining motives that any being could use to change the evil heart.

And for this service—this crowning feature of the scheme of ransom—the Holy Spirit of God has found full and constant employ during all the centuries that have elapsed since He was poured forth at Pentecost.

But for what He has done, and is doing, to dissuade and to persuade, even the death of God's only begotten and well-beloved Son, may have been without avail.

Thus far we have considered what God has found out, and done in the matter of ransom; and the conclusion to which we have come cannot be expressed more tersely and fittingly





than in the words of the apostle: "*Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*"

But as has been intimated, there is another side to this matter—the part that man has in the *acceptance* of the ransom or in its final and fatal *rejection*.

It must be understood that in all God has done to secure its acceptance, He has respected man's freedom.

Even under the powerful constrainings of the Holy Spirit, the motives employed are only moral and are therefore resistible.

7. The pivotal word in the matter of human salvation is *believe*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16: 31.)

Everywhere in the New Testament Scriptures believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is insisted upon, not as the ground, but as the condition—or *that without which no sinner can be saved*. Christ Himself asserted in terms the absoluteness of this condition. The apostles never gave any other direction to the anxious inquirer. And no one is justified in departing from the precedent thus established. Every

attempt to secure salvation through some other process, must result disastrously. This is *the* way which has been cast up by the wisdom and grace of God.

The fulfilment of this condition necessarily devolves upon the person who would be saved. He must believe for himself. No one can be his proxy in this matter.

*When* is this condition fulfilled? or, *what* is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

In replying to this question, we shall offer no apology for using material gathered from every quarter—from sources inspired and uninspired, giving credit for authorship where it is known, but using freely all suggestion and illustration, however homely, that may contribute to a better understanding of what is involved in a word that is in constant use among men, and is never of doubtful meaning, save only where it is used to express the condition of salvation through Jesus Christ.

It is quite remarkable, that there is no evidence such a question was ever propounded either to Christ or to the apostles. The jailor at Philippi did not ask what it was to believe. Neither did the thousands of convicted ones on the day of Pentecost. They un-


derstood well what the word signified.

Why then, should its meaning be such an enigma to us? Why must we be forever explaining and illustrating, and yet never be able to reveal to some minds the true conception of what it is to believe on Christ? Is it because our expositions have been lacking in simplicity?

Let, then, the answer we now attempt to make to the question propounded, be as plain as human speech can fashion it. And let those also, who read, become as little children, and so receive the Word which alone is able to make them wise unto salvation.

(1) In consistency with the doctrine of atonement, to wit: That Jesus Christ made a complete propitiation so that nothing of human suffering is required to supplement the sacrifice on Calvary, and nothing of human goodness to patch out an obedience that upholds the law and makes it honorable, evidently, the first thing in the act of faith is a *ceasing from all manner of doing, that implies, though never so remotely, a dependence on such doing for the helping on of the work of redemption.*

One who, under conviction of sin, had read and prayed and fasted, without finding peace, asked a recently converted friend, "What have



you done to get peace?" "Done," said the friend, "*I have done nothing. It is by what Christ has done, I have peace with God.*"

The answer only increased the other's distress, and the resolve was made never to rise from her knees until she had peace. Nature at length gave way: she fell into a deep slumber, and dreamed that she was falling over a frightful precipice, but had caught a twig by which she hung over the gulf. "Save me!" she cried; and a voice from below, which she recognized as Christ's, said, "Let go the twig, and I will save you." If I let go the twig, thought she, I will perish. But Christ, in tones tender and solemn, urged, "I cannot save you unless you let go the twig." She let it go, fell into His arms, and in the joy at feeling herself safe, awoke. And then she clearly saw that her own doings were the twig. She saw she must let this go, and fall into the arms of the Redeemer. She did it, and had peace.

"Till to Jesus' work you cling  
Alone, by simple faith,  
Doing is a deadly thing,  
Doing ends in death.  
Cast your deadly doing down,  
Down at Jesus' feet:  
Stand in Him, in Him alone,  
All glorious and complete."

(2) In the act of faith there is *an acceptance of Christ as the last and only chance of salvation.*

So long as the slightest glimmer of a hope of salvation from any other quarter remains; so long as there is a disposition to make some new experiment, and the mind vacillates between that experiment and the acceptance of Christ, there can be no committal of the soul to Him. The hesitation felt to risk all in His hands, renders the exercise of faith an utter impossibility.

Many years since, on a part of the British coast where beetling cliffs from three to five hundred feet in height overhang the ocean, a man who gained his livelihood by gathering the eggs of rock-birds from amid these cliffs, had, on one occasion, let himself down by a rope to a narrow ledge which was overhung by a higher portion of the cliff, and upon which, by a dexterous swinging of himself in the air he had secured a footing but had let go the rope. He realized in an instant the extremity of his peril. The fearful alternative was presented to his mind of being starved to death on the ledge or being dashed to pieces on the rocks four hundred feet below. As the rope he had quit-

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ted swung backwards and forwards, its long vibrations testified the mighty effort by which he had reached the awful predicament in which he stood. As he gazed upon it in agony, he saw that every movement was shorter than the one preceding, and that as it was gradually subsiding to a point of rest, each time it came the nearest it was a little further off than it had been the time before. He was convinced that that rope was his last and only chance of rescue, and that he must grasp it quickly, or it would be forever beyond his reach. So, saying to himself, "I can but perish; here goes," he sprang from the ledge as the rope was next approaching, seized it, and went home rejoicing.

How like this is our condition as sinners. Brought into frightful peril by our own act, we are maintaining a precarious foothold where no human help can reach us. From this extremity of peril there is one and only one way of escape. Christ is that way. He assures us of His ability and willingness to save even unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by Him. In full persuasion of the truth of His words, we see in Him our *only* and *last* chance of salvation.


If now, like the man on the ledge, we abandon every other hope of salvation and cast ourselves

upon Him, we shall, doubtless, so fulfil the conditions upon which our salvation is made to hinge.

(3) But in believing, the act of faith has to do more especially with the invitations and promises of Christ; *it is reliance upon His testimony; it is taking Him at His word*, just as you would take at his word any man in whose veracity you had unlimited confidence.

The written pledge of such a man would be fully as satisfactory as an oral one; but whether written or oral, you take him at his word. Herein, perhaps, childhood might lead us more wisely than adult years. The incident may not be new to the reader, but that fact need not detract from its illustrative charm.

A father had descended by a trap-door into his cellar, which in winter time was quite dark. His little daughter in trying to find him, came to the open door, and called: "Are you down cellar, papa?" "I am; would you like to come to me?" "It is dark; I can't." "Well, but I can see you though you cannot see me. I am right below you. If you will drop I will catch you." "Oh, I should fall, I can't see you." "I know it; but I am really here, and you shall not fall or hurt yourself. If you will jump, I



will catch you safely." The little girl strained her eyes to the utmost, but she could not catch a glimpse of her father, though she knew from his words that he was there. She hesitated, then advanced a little further, then summoning all her resolution she threw herself forward, and was received safely in her father's arms. A few days after, discovering the door open again, she called: "Shall I come again, papa?" "In a minute," he replied, and had just time to reach out his hands toward her, when in her childish glee she fell shouting into his arms, and clasping his neck, said: "I knew, dear papa, I should not fall."

All that there is mysterious in the act of faith is dissolved by this incident. "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1: 8, 9.) But there is a peril connected with this representation of faith, against which there is need to guard—the peril of confounding our own persuasions, impressions, or imaginings, with the assurances Christ gives.


A man, journeying toward London in a



steamer, is told that a French ambassador is on board. Early on the following morning, noticing several gentlemen walking the deck, and among them one covered with decorations to whom the others paid marked deference, he said to himself, that is the ambassador. And so he was; but the man's faith was based on his own persuasion, and so was unreliable, as the event proved. For, on advancing and expressing his gratification at being permitted to see and address the French ambassador, the latter, in order to try him says: "I, the ambassador!" Whereupon, the man blushes, and retires confused and asking pardon for his mistake. But, instantly, the other offers his hand, and says, "Yes, sir, I am the ambassador." Now mark, his belief changes its nature, and rests no longer on a persuasion of his own, but *upon the assurance given him by one in whose veracity he confides.*

So, in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, the faith that is genuine, the faith that endures, rests not upon some persuasion of our own, but upon what Christ Himself says.

In all ages the truest and most triumphant faith has been that which has rested on the Word of the Lord.



"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word."

David in a certain place (Ps. 119: 49.) prays: "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." The word of God was the basis of his hope. The springing of that hope in his bosom, its support, its anchorage, its confirmation, was of something God had said, and said to him.


And what was the word God had thus laid at the foundation of his hope? Did he construe a general promise so as to embrace himself? or a specific promise coupled with certain express conditions which he had fulfilled? Doubtless, in either case, his construction of the word of God would have gone unchallenged. Promises made to Israel in general, or promises made to God's people as such, were to all intents and purposes his. There was no need that his name should be spelled out, and his pedigree traced up to Abraham in the promissory instrument, in order that he might have a clear right to hold under it.

This David understood full well, and in the absence of all evidence of any direct personal pledges, we might infer that the act of appropriating the promises of God, and so making

them his own, was all that he meant to express. Nevertheless, from his youth up, David had been on the most intimate terms of communion with God. He had acted as His mouthpiece to others, and had been in receipt of special communications addressed to himself personally in which there were promises made, and covenant engagements entered into, whereby God bound Himself to him and to his seed. It may be, that some one of these pledges of personal favor was in mind at the offering up of his petition.

But, whatever the word was, so it was the word of God "unto His servant," it is clear enough that that word was the basis of his hope. He had built upon it, and supposed he had built in safety, his expectations of the divine blessing. And the shape these expectations had assumed—the peculiar nature of his hope had been determined by the same word.

There is no evidence that David either sought or wished to rest his hope on any other basis. He might have been tempted as other men have been, to rest it upon some marvelous experience. He might have said, Did I not have extraordinary light and comfort, and a clear consciousness of love to God? And did not all



my friends and acquaintance mark the change and confess the work divine? He might have built his hope upon some such experience. He surely had had his full share of what might be deemed wonderful in such experience. Hence, his prayer would have been, instead of what it was, "Remember that former experience of mine, and renew it unto me, that my hope may revive." Or, he might have been tempted to build his hope upon some similarity between his own and the experience of some other person well reputed among men for piety.

Instead of wishing to have anything of this sort remembered as the basis of his hope, he desired only that God would remember His own word, as expressed in pledge, promise, covenant, which word would be fulfilled. The thing which had gone out of His mouth would not be altered, neither would the covenant of His faithfulness fail. For, had He not sworn by His holiness, that He would not lie unto David?

David knew that the word of the Lord, confirmed as it thus was with an oath, endured forever, and so it gave him the strong consolation which his spirit craved. He could wish, no doubt, that God would forget all else, sooner

than allow one jot or tittle of His word to fail. It is not quite certain that he came early on to this high ground, but once there, and there perhaps after testing other bases of hope, he saw how rational and self-consistent was his position, how honorable to God and how safe for himself.

If the causation of hope is in God, if He has excited hope in any human bosom by His word, then has He become *responsible* for that hope. He guarantees its quality. It is plainly as enduring as the word upon which it rests. If *it* proves worthless, the fault is not his who cherishes the hope, but His, who has created it by His word. The word is false, and so the hope perishes. But if the word stands, so also must the hope, and He who is the Author of the word has the glory of the hope. To challenge the hope is to fritter away the word, is to unsettle our confidence in Him who uttered it. If God is without variableness or shadow of turning, then, if He has spoken, He must make it good.

But more, as salvation and all its blessed concomitants originated with God, surely there could be nothing gained by going beyond His word. If that did not stand sure, all else would




come to naught, and the whole fabric of grace would tumble down into one undistinguishable ruin.

The question then to be settled, and the only question of moment is, Can God by any possibility go back on His word? If not, then all those whom He has caused to hope in it are safe, as safe as He can make them. And if God be for us, who can be successfully against us, prevailing to the overthrow of our hope, and the prevention of the good which we have anticipated—the good pledged to us in the word of God?

(4) To complete the act of faith, there must be *some step taken corresponding to the conviction produced by the word of God.*

No definition of saving faith is complete that leaves out this element. "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works," wrote the apostle James. "Abram when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, *obeyed*, and he went out, not knowing whither he went out." (Heb. 11: 8.)

A man fallen into a deep pit calls for help. His neighbors come to the rescue, and throwing him a rope, promise to draw him out, if



he will lay hold upon it. He is convinced that the rope is strong enough, and that his neighbors are both able and willing, nay, anxious to save him; but he is not saved until he lays hold of the rope, in obedience to his convictions. Even so, the actual *committal* of the soul to Christ, the venturing wholly on Him, is the essential thing in the act of faith.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved." We are to hear these words just as the jailor at Philippi did, as a personal address, the same as if there was not another sinner in the wide world needing salvation, and inquiring, what must I do?

The instant any one of us, heeding these words, believes, his salvation is as sure as the promise and oath of God can make it. "*He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*"

At the earnest solicitation of a centurion, Jesus was making all possible haste to his house for the purpose of healing his servant, who was very sick.

For a reason that will presently be disclosed, the case had excited in the mind of Christ an unusual interest. As He neared the centurion's

abode He was met by persons instructed to say in the centurion's name: "Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee, *but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.* For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

What was it in the faith of the centurion, that rendered it so extraordinary; for most extraordinary it must have been to have excited the admiration of our Lord? Here was a man whose religious antecedents must have been largely amid heathen superstitions and the practice of idolatrous worship, who exercised a stronger and purer faith than any found among the chosen people of God. But what was it in his faith that made it so remarkable?

Speaking after the manner of men, there was something remarkable in the fact, that he could consent to rest his faith on so untried a founda-

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tion. For, it must be considered that the confidence which the average man in these days has in Christ, is a matter of slow growth. Even John the Baptist, who had proclaimed Him publicly as "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," was not so thoroughly settled in his belief, as not to feel a strong desire for additional evidence. And hence, after he was cast into prison, he sent two of his disciples to inquire, "Art Thou He that should come or look we for another."

But the centurion, with no more information, probably with less than that possessed by the generality of the Jewish people, was ready to to give Him his unreserved confidence. The simple assurance of Christ seemed to him an all-sufficient guarantee for the boon craved: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Christ was willing to accommodate Himself to a much lower order of faith. He would have come quite to the house, would have entered the sick chamber, and there, in the centurion's presence, would have performed the act of healing. But the centurion, as he thought of the greatness of the boon he had asked, and of the power and goodness involved in its bestowment, was so overcome with a sense

of his own unworthiness, that he could not ask so much. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only." Doubtless the larger proportion of those applying to Christ for a similar favor, would have deemed it very essential that He should come into the presence of the sick man. Others would have insisted that He should lay His hands on him, or do some other thing in helping on the miracle. But the centurion asked only, that He would signify by a word, His willingness to exercise His power in behalf of his servant. Surely, in such faith there was something as remarkable as it was unusual.

But the reason he gives for accepting such a basis for his faith, was even more remarkable, evidencing as it did the profoundest conviction as to the source of Christ's power, and the legitimacy of its exercise in the alleviation of human suffering, and the saving of human life: "For, I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

In other words his argument is this: "I hold a commission from the government to which I owe allegiance, by virtue of which, while en-



gaged in the discharge of my duties as one of its officers, I represent the whole authority and power of the government, which are pledged to my fullest support, and to the execution of all orders transmitted through me to those in subordinate positions under me. So that when I say to this one—this *servant*—Go, he goeth; or say to another, Come, he cometh. Even so, likewise, Thou Jesus, servant of the most high God, if Thou hast an appointment under His government, to fulfil certain functions; if, as Thy wondrous works declare, it is a part of Thy mission to heal all manner of sickness and disease among the people—then Thou dost represent in Thine own person, the whole authority and power of the divine administration which are pledged to sustain Thee in the fulfilment of Thy trust to the last degree. The universe of matter and mind, the forces visible and invisible; all malign and beneficent agents, diseases and their remedies, are subject to Thy control. If Thou dost will my servant's recovery, all these forces, elements, agents, will conspire to do Thy bidding.


The philosophy of his faith was that the power to heal lay back of any external application. It was not by the touch of holy hands,

or by any other form of physical contact whereby an electrical current was established between Himself and the person diseased, that Christ acquired the power of imparting healing mercy. His body was not a magnetic battery, standing ready charged with all the invisible essences of the *materia medica*.

The purpose to do, the simplest pledge and manifestation of which was His word, in the judgment of the centurion as fully committed Him to the exercise of all the power at His command for the recovery of the sick to health, or for the doing of any other thing essential to the fulfilment of His mission, as could any outward application,

No thoroughly upright man would give his word in pledge, unless he supposed he should be able to make it good. Much less would such a man suffer his word to go unredeemed, unless the power of redemption was absolutely taken away. "A good man sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." It is insupposable that Christ would pledge His word without purposing to make it good. Wherefore, He affirms: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not, till all be fulfilled.

There is nothing in this mode of reasoning



fallacious, nothing misleading. Indeed, the inferences of the centurion were better sustained than he imagined. For, had he understood, as we do, the relation Christ sustained to the work of creation, his faith would have grown with the record of that transaction. We understand that "the world was made by Him, and that without Him was not anything made that was made." And when we inquire, how the world was made by Him? the answer is: "By the word of His power." He spake, and from its chaotic elements, matter became organized into forms corresponding to the divine ideal of what was good. "He said, Let there be light; and there was light." "He said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and the firmament appeared." "He said, Let the waters be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear, and it was so." "He said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowls that may fly above the earth in the firmament of heaven; let the earth also bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit; let it bring forth cattle and creeping things, and beasts, each after its kind, *and it was so.*"


The word of Christ in all the exigencies of

the creation, was wholly sufficient to fashion and give life. And it doubtless is in view of this fact, that He is called the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

And now shall any one who has witnessed the power of Christ in fashioning a world like this, peopling it with its myriad races of living creatures, fixing the laws of their being, and confining them within certain prescribed limits; shall any one who has still further witnessed the implicit obedience rendered to that word by all the forces of nature, material and immaterial, and by all forms of existence, animate and inanimate, doubt whether that word is influential enough to control the wastings of disease?

"And Jesus said unto the centurion, As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour." So far as its effect upon Christ was concerned, the faith that rested solely on the basis of His word, accomplished all that was desired, and was therefore a complete success.

How could it be otherwise? When Jesus saw how greatly He was honored by the centurion's faith, He could not turn away from his petition.



His estimate of the Miracle-worker was justified by the result. His word was irresistible, as he believed it would prove to be. It alone was sufficient. Without laying His hand upon the sick man, without entering the apartment where he lay, without even coming beneath the roof which sheltered him, He spake and it was done. The disease was cured as thoroughly and as speedily as it would have been if, instead, He had stretched forth His hand over the sufferer. or had allowed Himself to be touched of him.

The efficacy of Christ's word is manifestly not limited to cases of healing, but embraces every occasion whatsoever in which He, by virtue of His commission, is authorized to speak, and in which His word is the legitimate basis of faith.

An incident will suffice to show that He designed to inspire a limitless trust in the efficacy of His word.

"And they brought unto Him a man afflicted with palsy, lying on a bed. . . . Jesus said to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. And certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

For, whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, walk?

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then saith He to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and go into thine house.”

If, now, as between the healing of disease and the forgiveness of sins, it is immaterial to which the word of Christ is applied, it proving equally effective in the one case as in the other, then the inference is just, that upon whatever subject He speaks in the exercise of His mission, His word is with authority and power.\*

He has given His word in pledge to the undeserving and the guilty. He has proffered forgiveness and life eternal. As a basis of hope for any sinner who inclines to accept the proffer, what more can be asked than Christ's own pledge of immunity for past offenses, and His promise of grace for the future? If it can be ascertained under what circumstances and upon what conditions Christ makes His pledge of forgiveness, then, whenever a sinner shall

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\*Let the reader examine carefully what is recorded in Mark 1: 23-26; 40-42; Matt. 8: 16; 9: 2-6; 12: 10-13; Luke 6: 8-10; 7: 14-16, 8: 24; 7: 37-50; 9: 42; 17: 12-14; John 4: 49, 50; 11: 43, 44; 5: 5-9. Also in Mark 5: 6-8; Luke 7: 37-50.



find these circumstances met and these conditions fulfilled in his own experience, he may be assured that the pledge is fulfilled to him. In that crisis of his history, Christ is saying to him as He said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

If he will but believe the word, and be content to make it the sole and sufficient basis of his hope, his sense of condemnation will remove. his burden will roll off, and a sweet sense of peace and quiet assurance will pervade his soul.

So, likewise, if there shall come an exigency wherein sore temptation shall drive the pardoned sinner almost to the verge of despair, the time is propitious for him to claim the grace which Christ has promised should be sufficient for his utmost need. The word of Christ will not fail • him in his extremity. The draft upon the treasury of His fullness will be honored. Out of the fire, and out of the flood, out of the seething furnace and out of the lion's den, the redeemed one will come forth unharmed.


If the word of Christ is enough, why demand more? He may indeed accommodate Himself to our weaknesses; He may give us the dew in the fleece or dryness there; He may bid us, "Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands,

or reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side"; but why ask it?

The first Napoleon, while reviewing his troops, dropped the reins of his horse, which instantly set off on a furious gallop. A soldier, seeing his peril, sprang from the ranks, seized the bridle, and handed it respectfully to the emperor. "Much obliged to you, captain," was the graceful acknowledgement. The man, saluting his chief, naively asked, "Of what regiment, sire?" "Of my guards," was the reply, as he rode off. Instead of returning to the ranks, the soldier approached the group of staff-officers, one of whom sneeringly asked, "What wants this fellow here?" "This fellow," responded the soldier, "is a captain of the guard!" "You, a captain of the guard!" Pointing to the retreating emperor, he replied earnestly, "*He said it.*"

Is the word of Jesus of less account than that of an emperor? Has He said it? And will not that suffice?

A candidate for admission to the Christian Church, not yet in her teens, appeared before the examining committee, and was interrogated as to the ground of her hope. To the questions, "Do you believe that Christ has received you?"



that He has pardoned, and saved you?" she had replied in the affirmative, when one sitting by asked, "Why do you believe that Christ has received, pardoned, and saved you?" Without a moment's hesitation, there came the quiet, but firm and almost startling response: "Because He said He would." And that was a revelation that has never since waxed dim. It was the leadership of the little child. And the eyes of the venerable men who sat by, as they looked one upon another, filled with tears, as if they had seen a great light.

Be sure, dear reader, that "the word of the Lord endureth forever," and that nothing added to it can possibly add anything to the security of the soul that trusts in Jesus. Resting on that word you have a reason for your hope that is both substantial and unchanging.

A former parishoner of the author, who united in his own person the functions of preacher and teacher, relates in a little tract, signed "J. D.," published by American Tract Society, how he entered the room where a young wounded colonel, his son, was apparently near death. "Oh my father, how glad I am to see you! I was afraid you would not come till it was too late. What did the doctor tell you? Don't be

afraid to tell me just what he said." "He told me you must die." "How long does he think I can live?" "Not to exceed four days, and that you may drop away any hour."

With great agitation, he exclaimed, "Father, is that so? Then I must die! Oh! I am not prepared to die now. Do tell me how I can get ready! Make it so plain that I can get hold of it. Tell me in a few words, if you can, so that I can see it plainly. I know you can for I used to hear you explain it to others." . . . "My son, I see you are afraid to die." "Yes, I am." "Well, I suppose you feel guilty." "Yes, that is it. I have been a wicked young man. You know how it is in the army."

"You want to be forgiven, don't you?" "Oh, yes! That is what I want. *Can* I be, father?" "Certainly." "Can I know it before I die?" "Certainly." "Well, now father, make it so plain that I can get hold of it."

At once an incident which occurred during the school days of my son came to mind.

"Do you remember while at school in —— you came home one day, and, I having occasion to rebuke you, you became very angry, and abused me with harsh language?"

"Yes, father, I was thinking it all over a few



days ago, as I thought of your coming to see me, and felt so badly about it, that I wanted to see you, and once more ask you to forgive me."

"Do you remember how, after the paroxysm of your anger had subsided, you came in and threw your arms around my neck, and said, 'My dear father, I am so sorry I abused you so. It was not your loving son that did it. I was very angry. Won't you forgive me?' "

"Yes, I remember it very distinctly,"

"Do you remember what I said to you as you wept upon my neck?" "Very well. You said, 'I forgive you with all my heart,' and kissed me. I shall never forget those words."

"Did you believe me?"

"Certainly. I never doubted your word."

"Did you then feel happy again?"

"Yes, perfectly; and since that time I have always loved you more than ever before. I shall never forget how it relieved me when you looked upon me so kindly, and said, 'I forgive you with all my heart.' "

"Well, now, this is just the way to come to Jesus. Tell Him, '*I am so sorry,*' just as you told me, and ten thousand times quicker than a father's love forgave you, will He forgive you.

Then you must take His word for it, just as you did mine."


"Why, father, is this the way to become a Christian?"

"I don't know of any other,"

"Why, father, I can get hold of this. I am so glad you have come to tell me how."

He turned upon his pillow to rest . . . I soon felt the nervous hand on my head, and heard the word "father" in such a tone of tenderness and joy, that I knew the change had come. "Father, my dear father, I don't want you to weep any more, you need not. I am perfectly happy now. Jesus has forgiven me. I know He has, for He says so, and I take His word for it, just as I did yours." The doctor soon came in and found him cheerful and happy—looked at him, felt his pulse, which he had been watching with intense anxiety, and said: "Why, Colonel, you look better." "I am better, doctor. I am going to get well. My father has told me how to become a Christian, and I am very happy. I believe I shall recover, for God has heard my prayer."

Some sixty years since there came from the press one of the most remarkably useful books



of modern times,\* entitled, "The Cause and Cure of Infidelity," by Rev. David Nelson, M. D., for many years a successful physician, and a sturdy unbeliever.

From that book, the author takes the liberty of transferring the following, from pages 247-250, in reply to sundry questions:

"Question 1. How am I to know God will pardon if I ask?

"Answer. Go and read of Him in the New Testament. After observing His kindness, compassion, and readiness to hear requests, you will begin to suppose that had you been there, offering a reasonable request, He would not have turned away from you. But if it had been a petition He told you to make, you would confidently expect His compliance. Now you have to recollect that He is unchangeable; He is as kind now as He then was; He is as ready to hear as He was. He has told you to ask for pardon, and He will not refuse you.

"Question 2. If I ask for the pardon of all my sins, and to be taken into the number of the children of God, and to have my name with the ransomed, how am I to know when it is done?

"Answer. He has had it written down for

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\* Published by American Tract Society.


your encouragement, that, if you ask, you shall not be refused. He had it written because He does not appear to sinners, and they will not hear His lips pronounce words on this subject. When you ask, wanting pardon, you have reason to believe that He does not refuse, because He says He will not.

“Question 3. Am I to hear no whisper, or to have no strong indication, hear no voice, or have no singular impulse, to let me know that my sins are blotted out?

“Answer. No, Christ has made you no such promise. You will not see the angel that blots out your sins; you will not see the Savior to inform you that it is done: ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’ Blessed are those who believe the Savior’s word as it stands on the page of His Book, as promptly as they would if they had with Him a personal interview.

“Question 4. If I were to ask for the remission of all my sins, and were to believe that my words were regarded, and my transgressions blotted out, I should surely rejoice: might I thus take comfort?

“Answer. If you ever believe Christ’s real statement as it stands in the Bible, it will be






faith, and joy is one concomitant of faith. Reader, if you wish pardon, our advice as to the manner of seeking it is to *act* just as you would do if you saw the Redeemer. Without seeing Him, ask as you would if you did see Him; without hearing Him speak, attend to His written words just as you would do if you heard Him speak them."

Robert McCheyne says: "We must close with Christ, not because we *feel* Him, but because *God has said it*, and we must take God's word even in the dark."

## THE CONSOLATION

1. The Gracious Invitation
  2. The Everlasting Covenant
  3. The Abundant Pardon
  4. The Signs Following
  5. The Hope in Mercy
  6. The Reception of Sinners
  7. The Assurance of Hope
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### III

#### THE CONSOLATION

1. Let us go back with the Interpreter more than twenty-six hundred years, and read anew the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. The gist of the Gospel message as it was seven hundred years before the advent of Christ, is here; and we venture to say that nowhere else in so small a compass, can be found a fuller or richer Gospel than in the thirteen verses of this chapter. Though quite as familiar to the ordinary reader as any equal portion of the Old Testament Scriptures, yet few, comparatively, read understandingly the portion that contains the *consolation* features of the message.

Place in parallel columns without chapter and verse, the opening paragraphs of this chapter and the closing portion of the last chapter of the Revelation, and how do they essentially differ? Without the open volume before them, how many could tell which was the old wine and which the new, the flavor is so alike? A countless multitude of all nations, and races,

and tongues, frantic with soul-misery, are running to and fro through the earth with the question ever uppermost, "Who will show us any good?"

On the far-off horizon they behold day after day, the deceitful mirage, and rush frantically toward it only to realize a bitter disappointment. Suddenly a gracious voice breaks upon the ear: "*Ho, every one that thirsteth*"—and who of this multitude thirsts not?—"Come ye to the waters." An inexhaustible supply of living water breaks forth amid the desert where the consuming thirst of all may be slaked. Not for the favored few who are able and willing to pay for their privileges, is this merciful provision made. "*And He that hath no money, Come.*"

Millions on millions have not the wherewithal to pay for what they must soon have or perish. Yet of these millions, many hesitate to accept the gracious invitation. Whereat the voice grows more earnest: "*Come, Yea, Come.*" Water! Wine! Milk! Water for all, wine and milk for those *in extremis*. "*Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" What wondrous graciousness is this! And yet it is so like our God, to whom belongeth of


right all riches—the silver and the gold, the cattle upon a thousand hills, the earth and the fullness thereof. Water, wine, milk, the essentials for the support of life, are for all life.

But some there be who still heed not the urgent invitation. Again the voice is heard; but now it is full of remonstrance: “*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?*” Alas! what infatuation, what madness is this! Men laboring incessantly, and spending lavishly, yet getting no satisfaction out of what they accumulate or expend, their souls the meanwhile famishing for they know not what—the indefinable good.

Is it all in vain, that the voice continues crying: “*Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness*”?

There is good for the soul—something that will satisfy its cravings—and the soul would surely seize upon it, would delight itself in it, were it but let follow its own immortal instincts.

O, that God could get the ear of men, restless, unhappy, striving ever and vainly, because unwisely, for the good! “*Incline your ear*”—an ear that, maybe, has hitherto been reluc-



tant to hear, that has been turned away from hearing, but is now eager to catch the word that falls from the lips of Him who bringeth good tidings. "*Incline your ear and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live.*"

The immortal part in you—that which hath capacity for the highest happiness or the most unspeakable misery—shall live.

It matters comparatively little what becomes of the body, if that which is immortal in you lives in bliss.

2. "*And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*"

Covenants between men are frequently broken, because one or the other, or possibly both parties, are willing it should be so; one or both thinking to derive some advantage from the breach.

There would be little consolation in a covenant God might make with us, if it were a covenant for a day or a year, or any number of days or years: a covenant that sometime in the long hereafter, perhaps after the lapse of centuries, would be subject to breach on God's part. And there would be quite as little consolation in a covenant that might be dissolved by the party of the second part, whenever he wearied in the

fulfilling of his part of the compact. If it were understood that under great provocation, God would release him from his engagements, and consent to the dissolution of the covenant, it might have been better for both parties that no covenant had been entered into. God, knowing well how unreliable even the best of men are, deliberately, and for the wisest reasons, proposes to make with them an everlasting covenant—a covenant not subject to dissolution at the caprice of the party of the second part.

The covenant holds, and will hold through all time and all eternity, because with the party of the first part there is “no variableness neither shadow of turning.”

He has announced publicly and with distinct emphasis, “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My mouth.”

The party of the second part may violate his engagements, but God will not follow his pernicious example. These are His words: “If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not take from them nor suffer *My* faithfulness to fail.”



In case of one who has entered into solemn engagements with God in the everlasting covenant, and has gone so far astray that no other hope of his recovery remains, this assurance is one full of consolation, not only to sorrowing friends, but also to whomsoever has gone astray. There is always, in his case, a last chance. God's covenant will not be broken.

It should be the understanding with all who would enter into harmonious relations with God under His scheme of ransom, that He makes no proposals of a temporary character. It is an everlasting covenant or no covenant at all. If indisposed to enter into such a covenant then the estrangement continues. To give distinct emphasis to what is a blessed reality, and what must be accepted as such by all who would test His faithfulness in this particular, He instances David, whose defection from the way of righteousness had been of the most shocking character. If ever the mercies of God were to fail, despite the everlasting covenant, they would certainly have failed in his case. Wherefore, when it is added, "*Even the sure mercies of David,*" we are not only to infer that David certainly found mercy, after his grievous transgression, but that all with whom God has made

an everlasting covenant, will be surely and forever holden of that covenant—one party to such a covenant alone not being able to dissolve or even weaken its binding force.

But we pass on until the voice sounds an *alarm*. There is danger ahead for those who incline not their ear to hear the gracious words that have been already spoken. The advances God makes toward a wished-for reconciliation, cannot always be treated with contumely, or even with neglect. He will not always chide, neither will He restrain His anger forever. Hence the danger-signal: "*Seek the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.*"

There is consolation in the assurance that we are not to be left unwarned; that there is One, who, even while we are going astray, takes an interest in us, and will interpose to save us from passing beyond the limit of the divine compassion. He bids us beware of procrastinating until such time as His patience is exhausted, and He can no more be found of us. He exhorts us to call upon Him while He is near; from which the inference is legitimate, that He will not always be near those who delay to call upon Him seasonably.

He does not stop to argue the matter of our

extreme peril, and of the necessity of making haste to escape in His time. There is the danger-signal—let men be warned!

3. All that has gone before in this wonderful chapter is but introductory. Now that the way is prepared, the burden of the message of special concern to men which the prophet was charged to deliver, is in these memorable words: "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy: and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*"

Let the wicked—the man guilty of the overt act of sin, and who possibly prides himself on what he has done in the open—let the wicked of every degree of guilt and of every form of transgression, forsake his way, making no provision for a return to it—such provision being incompatible with forsaking it; and let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts, which, though covered out of sight of his fellow man are yet naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom he has to do; and let him—whether designated a wicked or an unrighteous man—*return unto the Lord*, with honest purpose to serve Him henceforth; "*and He will have mercy*

*upon him, and unto our God for He will abundantly pardon."*

He *will*—not He *may*. There is no room for a conjecture as to the result. That is definitely settled by a divine fiat.

It is this large promise that stands out before us as the consolation *par excellence*, which follows in the wake of, and yet is a component part of the ransom. It expresses accurately just what God is able and willing to do for those who fall in with His plan of redemption. He will, on fulfilment of the conditions specified, deal mercifully with the sinner, granting him an abundant pardon.

It is this solemn but conditional engagement, voluntarily entered into on God's part, that is the key to all that follows.

Like a golden thread with connection never broken, it illumines the whole track of the inspired thought to the end of the chapter.

God's promise of an abundant pardon, which He stands ready to redeem, cannot be lost sight of. It must be believed that nothing short of such a promise would meet the necessities of the case. If there were any reservation made, we should never feel safe, and so could never experience any solid comfort. If the pardon did

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not cover every form and degree of sin; if it did not embrace every one of the ten thousand of our offenses; how could it be known that, for the exceptional sin, the whole penalty of the law would not be executed?

As if to make assurance doubly sure, it is added: "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts.*"

You think that pardon without a mental reservation; pardon that covers a multitude of sins; pardon that cleanses from all unrighteousness; that washes and makes whiter than snow; that restores to all privileges forfeited by transgression; that is a finality to such an extent, that nothing additional can be done or needs to be done for the remission of sins that are past, is a measure of compassion that transcends all belief.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. In My way of thinking, that mode of pardoning guilty men is not only the most effective as a reformatory measure, but is the most for My glory.

"*Neither are your ways,*" of pardoning the guilty, "*My ways.*" You pardon with a mental reservation, and qualify by saying: "I can forgive, but I cannot forget; my pardon will hold good so long as you prove yourself worthy;

if you go back on your pledges, the sentence, still in force, will be executed; you will, meanwhile, be strictly watched, and any defection from the way of righteousness will be known."

Fortunate it is for every sinner, that God's ways of pardoning are not man's ways, else how little cheer there would be for one who supposes himself to be a subject of His clemency.

*"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways"* of pardoning the guilty *"higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Could anything in the way of contrast be more striking? Calculate the distance between the heavens and the earth, as we measure it, and how vast! The calculations of the astronomer indicate spaces of millions of miles between the earth and the heavenly spheres; and that is the measure of the outreaching of God's ways in pardoning the guilty, above man's ways.

What man thinks or does in this matter, is no gauge of God's dealings with the wicked and the unrighteous whom He has persuaded to comply with the conditions of an abundant pardon.

4. *Signs following.*

To illustrate and to confirm what He has al-



ready spoken, He adds: "*For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and causeth it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater*" —as certainly as the rain and snow fulfil the beneficent purpose for which they are sent, so certainly "*shall My word . . . not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*"

This is doubtless true of every word that goeth forth out of God's mouth, of the whole body of Scripture; but the word here referred to is the word that pledges abundant pardon. That word shall not return unto Him void: it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereunto it is sent—that is to say, it will *certainly* take effect in the pardoning of the guilty.

Unlike what may happen and what has happened, when a pardon has been issued by a human governor, the messenger to whom it is entrusted will not fail in its timely delivery. When God speaks the pardoning word, quicker than lightning it passes through the infinite spaces, and dissolves the handwriting that was


against the sinner. And now, what follows? The effects of pardon as they have been experienced through all time, and by ten thousand times ten thousand pardoned souls, are graphically described; "*For ye shall go out with joy*"—out from any place where the word of an abundant pardon began to take effect, from the bed-chamber, the grove, the mountain summit, the desert solitude, the counting-room, the railway coach, the crowded salon. "*And shall be led forth with peace,*"—a peace like that which fell upon the sea of Gallilee, when Jesus said to the tossing billows: "*Be still.*"

And yet, the connection between cause and effect may not be recognized immediately; but when he has gone forth with a light heart, a great surprise awaits him. He finds himself suddenly in a new world. Nature has robed herself, to his seeming, in garments of praise. "*The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*" But it is not the natural world that has undergone the transformation. It was the same beautiful world yesterday that it is to-day. The change has been wrought in him—he is a new creature. And it is the abundant pardon that has made him so.



*"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree."* The things that aforetime vexed and worried him, the things that were like thorns and briars in the experiences of his everyday life, the things that made him a torment and a terror to those nearest to him in his home, in his business, in his social relations, have disappeared. The fir-tree and the myrtle-tree have displaced the thorn-tree and the brier-bush, and so all the machinery of life works smoothly. The description is accurate, it conforms to the experience of unnumbered thousands of pardoned souls—their earlier experiences—to a greater or less extent, the experience under the new dispensation, as under the old.

But there remains to cap the climax of this showing of the consolation: *"And it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."* "It"—the word that shall not return unto the Lord void, the word that pledges an abundant pardon. Surely, it may stand for that. May it not also represent the effects of pardon—the experience of the pardoned soul that we have had under contemplation, his blissful experience—the joy, the peace, the calm, the quietness, the wondrous



change in himself, the change visible to others? Verily, such an experience must evermore lend new significance to the name by which God would henceforth be known to him, the name which He proclaimed to Moses on Mount Sinai: "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." He can nevermore associate the name of the Lord God with anything unreasonable or unkind.

The memory of this experience may grow indistinct, unless renewed from time to time, and yet it can never wholly pass out of mind. It will prove to him an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

But, better still, and *the* feature upon which special stress is put, this act of pardon, with its blessed results, shall be *to the Lord* for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. The transaction is one that can never grow indistinct in His recollection. He can never forget that He has pardoned this or that man abundantly. And He can never be indifferent to his subsequent career or to his ultimate fate.


The man himself may grow reckless, and, for a time, may lose sight of the fact that he is a

subject of the divine clemency, and under the most solemn obligations to walk circumspectly before Him; but in God's treatment of him, that fact will always be considerably weighed.

5. A fifth phase of the consolation is found in the revealed fact: "*The Lord taketh pleasure . . . in them that hope in His mercy.*" (Ps. 147: 11.) That God is merciful, that sinners, great sinners, not without reason, hope in His mercy, is freely conceded. But that He taketh pleasure in them that hope in His mercy, the same as if they had done Him a favor by cherishing such a hope, is a phase of the subject that affects us like a new revelation. Somehow, we are prone to conceive of mercy as doled out reluctantly to the guilty. But it is for us to see that there is nothing in the whole compass of human speech, no word, or phrase, that could make it clearer that God has sought to inspire confidence in His merciful disposition toward the guilty.

The words great, high, full, sure, rich, abundant, plenteous, tender, enduring, everlasting, are those freely and frequently employed by the Holy Spirit, to represent the divine disposition, purpose, and practice in the showing of mercy. The vocabulary of mercy is compre-

hensive enough to meet the exigencies of every sinful soul. If there be a consciousness of great guiltiness, a pardon not scant, but abundant, a pardon covering alike the multitude and aggravation of offenses, cleansing from all unrighteousness is the proffered boon. If mercy itself has been abused—if, after the experience of pardon, there has been a frightful relapse, by which the patience of a long-suffering God has been tried to the utmost: if the impression has become very strong that the day of grace is ended—the mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting, the mercy that is enduring and sure, the salvation that is to the uttermost, becomes the antidote to the fast-gathering gloom that is settling down upon the soul, saving it from a plunge into the gulf of a hopeless despondency: if, while not utterly despairing of mercy, the hope therein is never assured, is always made contingent upon the degree of creature unworthiness, the frequency of relapses, the measure of light sinned against, and, consequently, is never comforting and never quite disassociated from the idea that God pardons with a mental reservation, forgives after the manner of some men—forgives but does not forget—how sweetly reassuring is the



testimony which affirms and reaffirms, that He is slow to anger, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, that He even delighteth in mercy. Should it be asked *why* the Lord is at such pains to create the impression, that He taketh pleasure in them that hope in His mercy, we answer: The *Scheme* which admits of the exercise of mercy, may be regarded as the masterpiece of the divine skill. God has put into it all the treasures of His wisdom. He has perfected it at an infinite cost to Himself. His heart is in it. It is His glory, displaying as it does all the perfections of His character.

If there is anything of all He has wrought in the universe, that He would have admired, anything He would have practically tested, it is this scheme.

Hence, to inspire hope in His mercy, is to give practical effect to what He has done in the matter of man's redemption.

The value of any human invention depends upon its general utility. The more universal its *use*, the larger the income of the inventor from his royalty. An invention, however costly, would be written down a failure, if no one was benefited by it.

And so God's revenue of glory from the

scheme of mercy will be graduated by its practical effects. From every sinner saved under that scheme He gets a royalty. The event increases by just so much His revenue of glory.

Hence, He cannot be otherwise than pleased with the steady increase of the multitudes in whose bosoms a hope in His mercy is inspired.

Wherefore, it can be no credit to any man to despair of the mercy of God. If it were man's mercy that was distrusted, the case would be different; and yet, what man, after affirming, over and over, in the strongest possible terms, his willingness to show mercy, would not be affronted by a questioning of his sincerity? Indeed, instead of being a credit, it is an utter discredit to any man to act or feel as if there were no mercy for him. No matter how much he has abused that mercy in the past, no matter how much light he has sinned against, no matter how deserving he is of punishment, it is nothing to the case if mercy is proffered him. In face of all God's protestations of compassion, his failure to take comfort—his tears and groans—can be accounted nothing better than spiritual hysteria. In the lap of his misery lies unopened and unread an abundant pardon, sealed with the royal signet, which would speedily

quiet all his apprehensions; and yet, he continues his lamentations. We are sure such conduct can be only a trial to the patience of a long-suffering God.


6. An object lesson from the life of Jesus Christ, will admirably serve as another phase of the consolation. As God manifest in the flesh, whatever He did in the way of exemplifying what had been taught under the older economy, as to the marvelous compassion of God, is full of consolation for the sinner whose guilt is most conspicuous; and it is he who stands most in need of comfort—comfort from Him who never ministers false comfort to sinners of either high or low degree.

Jealous of His growing influence with the people, and smarting under His frequent rebukes, the Pharisees and scribes were ever on the lookout for some occasion to find fault with Jesus. Such an occasion they think they have found as they see “all the publicans and sinners drawing near for to hear Him.” “This man,” they exclaim, “receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” And this He had done, and was not ashamed of it. Nay, He wished that it might be published far and near, to the intent that all men, of all races, and times, and climes, might

know how true it was. If it were a fault as the Pharisees and scribes seemed to think, then they might make the most of it. For, the more offensive the fact might be to a few self-righteous persons, the more certain would it be to commend Him to the millions on millions of guilty, conscience-smitten men, who felt their need of just such condescension as He was manifesting.

Christ, in justification of His course, spake the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son; in each of which was taught one and the same great truth, that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,"—more joy than over "a just person that needeth," or thinks he needeth "no repentance." But the charge made by the Pharisees and scribes was true in a broader sense than they comprehended. Not on one occasion, but on many; not to hear His discourses, but to share in the benefits of His redeeming work; not to be associated with Himself on earth, but to reign with Him in glory, does Christ receive sinners. And this representation of Him, He wishes to be published everywhere, and to be universally accredited.

Let us have a clear conception of Christ Him-






self as the receiver of sinners. "This man," said they. And were they mistaken? Was He not a man? Yea, verily, the model man, the perfection of all that is manly in human nature. But He was more than a man. In His nature were joined in mysterious union the divine and the human. He was the Son of God as truly as He was the Son of man. He was called Rabbi—teacher—and such He was, but not a teacher of the ordinary stamp. He taught "as one having authority and not as the scribes." He was called also a prophet. And a prophet He was "like unto Moses." But He was more than that, even the fulfiller of prophecy. His position in the universe is that of supreme ruler. "The government is laid on His shoulder." For special purposes connected with the work of human redemption, He was manifest in the flesh, and yet He was "the Mighty God." But who are they that this man—this God-man—receives? Were we to throw open our doors for a grand reception, what sort of people would we be most anxious to see enter? Though we might not refuse those in humble circumstances, yet would we not wish it to be understood, that no persons of bad reputation—thieves, drunkards, harlots—would be welcome? If they should

press in unbidden, would they not be treated with great coldness? Would it not be broadly hinted that their room was preferable to their company? Our receptions would be, we will not say inappropriately under the circumstances, somewhat select affairs, in which the most fastidious might mingle without fear of contamination. If *we* were more indifferent to persons, nevertheless we know that among the better class of people, as the world goes, the discriminations referred to are made. And this was the class of people who censured most severely the conduct of Christ in departing from the usual custom of the best society, in that He received sinners with all the cordiality and graciousness that He did persons who had the odor of respectability and virtue about them.

The lowest, the vilest, the very worst persons to be found were thronging about Him, listening eagerly to His discourse, embracing His views of men and things, attaching themselves to His cause, and numbering themselves with His followers. And He was apparently as much pleased as if they had been the most unexceptionable characters in Judea. His course, in this respect, was very singular indeed, very unaccountable, and in the judgment of His sanc-



timonious critics, very reprehensible. Did He really know the character of the persons who were drawing near to hear Him, that they were such base, immoral, scandalously wicked persons? Certainly He did. And was He really glad to receive them? Felt He no inward disgust at their utter loathsomeness? Would He not have preferred to minister to a better, a more refined class of people, neglecting these? It was wholly according to His mind that these most debased, most wretched, most hopeless ones, should have the freest access to His person, and the fairest opportunity to hear and profit by His discourse. The fact that they had hitherto been neglected by the teachers of religion, and ostracized by the more moral and virtuous, was with Him, a reason why He should give them special attention. To receive them first of all, though not to the exclusion or neglect of others, was part of His original purpose, from the execution of which He was not to be diverted by the sneers and ungenerous criticisms of haughty Pharisees and learned scribes. He is willing, nay anxious to be known as "the sinner's friend." He has not changed in His attitude toward this class. He receives sinners as willingly to-day as He did eighteen

hundred years since. And in this He is consistent with Himself, and is in full harmony with all the Old Testament predictions concerning "Him that should come to redeem Israel," and with all the promises based upon His executed mission. He was consistent with Himself, for He maintained that He was not sent save unto the *lost* sheep of the house of Israel: that He came not to call the righteous but sinners unto repentance: that, as a spiritual physician, He was the need of the sick, or morally diseased, and not of the whole. He was equally consistent with Old Testament predictions, which foreshadowed the opening in Judah and Jerusalem of a fountain for sin and uncleanness; and with Old Testament promises, in which the hope was encouraged, that sins red as scarlet or as crimson, would become as wool or as snow. Moreover, His whole treatment of sinful ones from the beginning of His ministry, evinced the sincerity of His declared purpose to cast out none that came to Him. From the woman out of whom He cast seven devils, to the malefactor upon the cross, there was not one wretched sinful soul, that had applied to Him in vain.

But, we must not fail to note *how* Christ received. No one was made to feel that His

grace was bestowed reluctantly. In no word or act of His, could there be detected anything that was inconsistent with His claim to be meek and lowly in heart. He was all that. And while it might be said that He encouraged no such familiarity as breeds contempt, He did encourage the most perfect confidence and affection. The forgiveness that He spoke, a priceless boon to the guilty, was cordial, and was evermore accompanied with a look of ineffable tenderness never to be forgotten by one who had experienced it.

Christ's purpose in thus receiving sinners was doubtless twofold. He wished to benefit them, and, through their benefit, advance His own kingdom. They would be benefited in a variety of ways through such a reception as He accorded them.


(1) In affording them an opportunity of listening to religious instruction at the mouth of a competent teacher, they would share a privilege the like of which they had never before enjoyed. The scribes, and other recognized expounders of the divine statutes, had taken no pains to instruct the lower order of minds among the people. If they had occasionally listened to a discourse by one of the Rabbis, they had found

it so far above their comprehension, or so intermixed with traditions of the elders, and other human lore, that the word of God was rendered of no effect. Christ, on the contrary, spoke to them with great simplicity, making everything plain by the variety and abundance of His illustrations and similes. His words consequently, were with power. They felt what He said. They drank in the doctrine of the kingdom with an unwonted relish. The truth dissipated the darkness of scepticism, and freed them from the dominion of error and prejudice, if it did not emancipate them from the despotism of guilt.

(2) It was not simply in the matter of religious education that Christ proposed to benefit those who came to Him. He hoped to lift them up in the scale of being by a genuine and lasting reformation. And He knew, that nothing is more essential to the success of any reformatory movement than the excitement of hope in the bosoms of the guilty. They must be made to believe that there is a fair chance for their rescue from the defilement and vassalage of sin; and that their efforts at reform, will meet with encouragement from the good. When, therefore, the publicans and sinners found that Christ was

not disposed in His receptions to discriminate against them, or even to pass them by unnoticed; when they found that He spoke to them as graciously as He did to any other class; that He really compassionated their case, and was willing to do what He could to lighten the burdens that weighed so heavily upon them, they felt the inspiration of a new and better purpose. They awoke to a sense of their manhood, and resolved that, not only for their own advantage, but for His sake who had so kindly interested Himself in their welfare, and was willing to suffer shame for their sake, they would be better men, breaking off their sins by righteousness. In His presence the reform began which His gracious words were so well fitted to guide, and stimulate, and radicalize. Not all, not even the major part, but many who came to Christ's receptions, went away better, and more reasonable men than when they came. And this was, in part, but not all, not even the chief thing contemplated by Christ in receiving sinners and eating with them.

(3) He sought to make *new creatures* of those who came to His receptions, so that, henceforth, the very love of sinning would be eradicated from their hearts. He purposed, as



far as lay in His power, to secure to them all the blessings appertaining to the lot of the most favored children of the kingdom. He would recover them from the condition and disabilities of prodigals, outcasts, criminals, and make them fellow heirs with Himself to His eternal inheritance.

But He consulted not their advantage alone, or chiefly, in giving them such a reception. He had higher and holier ends to secure. He had come to set up His kingdom in this revolted world. He had come to destroy the works of the devil, and wrest from him his usurped sceptre.

And where had the devil wrought more successfully than in the hearts and lives of sinners? Where were his strongholds, if not in the delusions, the prejudices, the perverse reasonings, the corrupt propensities, the stout rebelliousness of their guilty spirits? In changing the hearts of sinners, in purging out the leaven of moral corruption and spiritual debasement, in reducing them to allegiance to moral law, Christ was removing a very serious obstacle to the successful establishment of His kingdom.

How could He "set judgment in the earth," while He left in human society so dangerous




an element as was found in the persons of those who were reckless of moral restraint and defiant of all laws, human and divine?

This element being once eliminated or transmuted, His purpose would seem to have proceeded far on toward its accomplishment. To Christ, therefore, the flocking to His ministry of publicans and sinners, must have been a joyful omen, and a pledge of His ultimate success in the attempt He was making to subdue all things unto Himself. If He had done so much in transforming the worst of men, what might He not hope to effect in those not nearly so far gone in wickedness?

A precedent has been established by Christ for all time in the receptions He gave sinners, while He dwelt among them in human form; and as He is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," what consolation should every sinner find in that precedent?

The fact that he is a sinner, and a very great sinner, instead of deterring him from going to Jesus, should impel him the more strongly toward Him. If he were not a sinner, he would have no occasion for His services. If he were not a sinner he could have neither part nor lot in His great salvation.



7. But there remains another phase of the consolation—the *full assurance of hope*. Is there such an assurance? Do the Scriptures teach such a doctrine? If not, then what significance is there in the phrase itself, which is a Scriptural one? If not, then what is the import of the words: “Which hope we have like an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast and entering within the veil” ? (Heb. 6: 19.) If there is no *full* assurance of hope then there must be a very essential element in the consolation lacking.

Whatever may appear to be the nature of the fact, the fact itself must be conceded. Nothing less than such a fact would adequately express either the absolute sense of man's need, or God's disposition to supply that need. A state of suspense in regard to a matter of such vital moment creates uneasiness and unhappiness. If it were a question respecting the validity of our title to a house, or a farm, or to our chances of coming in as a joint heir to a valuable patrimony, it would be regarded as not only a most natural, but an altogether proper thing, that we should be anxious to establish our claim by irrefragable evidence, with no single link of the chain of proof wanting. We would

allow ourselves no rest until we had arrived at a certainty.

How much more reasonable then is this solicitude in respect to the validity of our hope of eternal salvation and our title to a mansion in glory. Is it presumable that God is indisposed to encourage those who wish to be thorough in looking up the evidence on this subject, or that He will fail to render them all needed assistance? Is it for His glory that they should be kept in a state of doubt, and be despoiled of the consolation that would come of assurance? On the contrary, it is reasonable to suppose that He desires, at the earliest possible moment, to bring them to the comfort of an assured hope. While He would not bolster up a false hope, why should He hesitate to confirm a true one?

Can there be perfect peace, complete emancipation from the fear of death, a rooting and grounding in love, without the hope of assurance? Let us inquire then into the nature of this hope, or the true ground of assurance.

There is unquestionably, much going under the name of assurance that is counterfeit. In the interest of the arch-deceiver of our race, the most consummate skill of the infernal regions will be brought into requisition to produce



a very close imitation of what is of such unquestionable value. Hence we need to proceed carefully in order to make sure that we have the real thing, and not an imitation.

Wherefore, we ask: Is there in this assurance something different from the *ordinary* experience of believers? Is it something attained *suddenly*? Is it something *permanent*? Is it something that requires constant *nursing* or is it *self-sustaining*?

The answers to these questions should reveal somewhat of the process by which this assurance is attained.

But, can we trace it to its origin? Can we find what it rests upon? Is its basis within or without ourselves?

Is it something that we discover *in* ourselves—some goodness or righteousness—that dissipates all doubt in respect to the genuineness of our hope and the certainty of our final salvation? Can we be saved without righteousness? If not, then must we not wait until we find that we have attained to a state of sinless perfection, ere we are authorized to cherish the hope of assurance?

“The man who comes to assurance and maintains it while his conscience testifies of him that

he is habitually declining in religious affections, living in the habitual neglect of known duty, or in the indulgence of actual sin, is one of the most fearful instances of self-deception in our world." \* "When an oily tongued dissembler, who cheats his creditors, or lives a life of secret uncleanness, rises in a prayer-meeting and prates glibly about his holiness, or his sanctified attainments, he simply unmasks his own hypocrisy." †

But that is not our case. We see too much of evil within us to allow of our entertaining the hope of assurance, if real goodness is to be the basis of that hope. As we never expect to be without fault before God in this world, we despair of ever cherishing such a hope; and if the cherishing of such a hope is essential to salvation, then we see not how we are ever to be saved.

Is it some *change* in ourselves—a gracious change that dissipates doubt, and lets in assurance? Is it a change, a real change from bad to good, from unmeetness to meetness—a change wrought *by* God, but *in* us? Would it be proper and safe to rest on regeneration as the basis of assurance?

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\* J. A. James. † Cuyler.


Is it a change from unrest to rest, from storm to calm? If Christ has said, "Peace, be still," and there is a subsidence of troubled feeling, and the winds and waves of the awful tempest rage no more—is that enough? Are we then saved beyond a peradventure? Will the great calm never be broken? Is there not something better than a calm? If so, what is it? and where shall it be found?

Is it a change from gloom to gladness, and from sorrow to joy? There is, as we have seen, a going out with joy, and a leading forth with peace, while mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands, as the result, apparently, nay, really, of God speaking pardon to the soul. Is this result a sufficient ground of assurance? If the joy and peace were to continue without intermission, would they be adequate? But they are subject to frequent intermissions; and what shall we do during the intervals when there is no sensible emotion of any kind? Has the ground of assurance perished, because a cloud passes between us and the sun, and, for a little, we must walk in darkness and have no light? If, then, that which we see in ourselves, or which we have experienced, is not com-

mended to us as a sufficient and altogether satisfying basis of an assured hope, where shall we find something better?


Is it to be found in something *outside-ourselves*—in a goodness or a righteousness other than our own, of which we may avail ourselves? There is no question as to the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. But may we build upon that? What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Is not God angry with the wicked every day? How then is that anger turned away from us who are confessedly wicked? God is merciful and will pardon the truly penitent. That, doubtless, is a fact fully revealed, and greatly encouraging. For as we have already seen, the Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in His mercy.

So far, so good. The first steps toward assurance cannot be taken so long as there is not believed to be in the character of God, a broad basis for the exercise of mercy, under suitable conditions. If those conditions are specified, belief must be made to conform thereto in order that the hope in His mercy may not be presumptuous. If He can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, then, not to believe in Jesus, and yet to hope in God's



mercy is to build upon a sandy foundation.

But, suppose the hope rests upon a pledge or promise of God, which is something over and above His simple grace or goodness, will that lead on to assurance? Certainly, if you are the promisee. Nothing is surer than the word of the Lord. If, with David, you can plead, Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope, you have certainly a very strong case. And you will be able to testify, in due time, "There failed not aught of the good which the Lord had spoken; all came to pass." "Where the word of a king is, there is power"—power to fulfil his promises. But you say, "Ah, if I only knew that the promise was made *to me*, or that it *embraced* me, then assurance would seem to be altogether rational; but there is the difficulty. I do not know I am the person meant. I fear I am not. I do not fully answer to the description. My name is not written in the promissory instrument, or, if it were, how could I know that there was not another of my name? True, the promise reads, 'Whosoever,' and that may embrace me, but if I only could be sure." Still it must be admitted, that the hope of assurance, wherever it is genuine, must rest on the basis





of God's word—*on something He has said, that has been appropriated by faith.* If doubt is ever dissipated, the word of God must do it. "It does not depend upon my say, or your say, or any man's say. Only God can give the decisive and infallible assurance to us, that we are safe for this world and for the next." Without a "thus saith the Lord," to clear away the mists, a constant vacillation must mark the experience of all who are seeking to assure their hearts before God. But surely, wherever, in the promissory instrument, "whosoever" is written, there my name may be inserted, If I so will.


Suppose, yet again, that the hope rests upon a *scheme* which saves men on certain conditions that never change, will not assurance be reached through the fulfilment of these conditions, and be of a high order? In the material world there is a law of gravitation whose operation is clearly defined, and is always the same. A man who leaps from a precipice is absolutely certain as to the direction he will take in falling: the law will carry him downward with a velocity that increases as the distance increases. A man who commits himself to the current of Niagara, is sure to reach the rapids sooner or

later and go over the falls into the abyss beneath. He may calculate to a certainty what his fate will be.

So is it with this scheme by which God purposes to save the children of men. If any man will allow himself to come under the full influence of the scheme, which God's Spirit is controlling and energizing, he will undoubtedly be wafted into the haven of eternal rest. "*As many as received Him, (the Christ) to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*"

The receiving of Christ is the step in the trend, so to speak, of this scheme of eternal salvation. If certain conditions are annexed to the scheme, a compliance with which on man's part is proclaimed to be of universal necessity, then a conscious compliance with these conditions must lay the foundation of an assured hope.

Have I fulfilled the conditions? Can I know that I have? Is there no liability to deception in regard to the mental exercises involved in repentance toward God, in submission, in saving faith? If the conditions are clearly unfulfilled—if only one of them is unfulfilled—then is the scheme not helping me toward an assured hope.



There are certain *signs* of a well-grounded hope. If these signs appear, is there in them a basis of assurance? And as the signs multiply, will the assurance grow stronger until it is full?


*"The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day."* Is it so with the path in which I am walking? Or, does my path shine less and less?

*"Whose house are we if we continue in the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end."* And has my hope been to me a source of perennial joy? *"He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure."* Has my hope this purifying power over my heart and life? Am I a cleaner person in every respect—freer from everything that defiles the inner or the outer man—than I was when I first began to hope in the mercy of God? *"Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory."* Am I experiencing this glorious transformation and becoming more and more like Christ? Are my fellow men—the persons that know me best—constrained to testify in my favor?

Without these signs—without every one of them—would the hope of assurance have a satisfactory basis?

The conclusions to which we are brought by these questionings, are, in the way of consolation, principally the following: *First*. That there is nothing, so far as we can discover, in the hope of assurance, that puts it beyond the reach of *any* believer. Whoever has, or has not attained to such a hope, the possibility of attaining thereto ought not to be questioned. It is a something not outside the ordinary normal religious growth. It is simply a high degree of attainment on a continually ascending scale. If all believers grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, as it is both their privilege and duty to do, why should any of them fail to outgrow the doubts and fears respecting their present acceptance and final salvation? Once outgrown, it does not follow that progression ceases, or becomes sluggish. Assurance may grow doubly sure, as it endures the varied tests to which it is subjected.

As to *permanence*, there is no reason why the hope of assurance should not continue so long as nothing is done to impair it. But it is quite possible to do that which will unsettle any hope, however well assured. A falling away from loyalty to God, a grieving of the Holy Spirit, in whom we are sealed unto the day of redemp-



tion, will be followed by a falling away from assurance. The necessity of enjoining upon believers the duty of working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, will never cease. That assurance is a counterfeit, which discards this manner of working as no longer necessary; which is above fearing lest a promise being left of entering into the heavenly rest, there should be a seeming to come short of it. Nevertheless, it may be permitted to speak confidently of the hope that is in us, and say in the words of the apostle, "We *know* that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

*Second.* If these conclusions are justified, then every believer should seek to attain to a full assurance of hope, not for his own comfort chiefly, but quite as much for the honor of God. It can be no credit to Him, surely, to be suspected of making a will for the benefit of His children, and leaving it in doubt as to the parties who may inherit under its provisions. It may not be necessary that the name of every heir should be spelled out in the body of the instrument; but if all the children are to be recognized as heirs to inherit share and share alike,

the only question at issue is that of *paternity*.

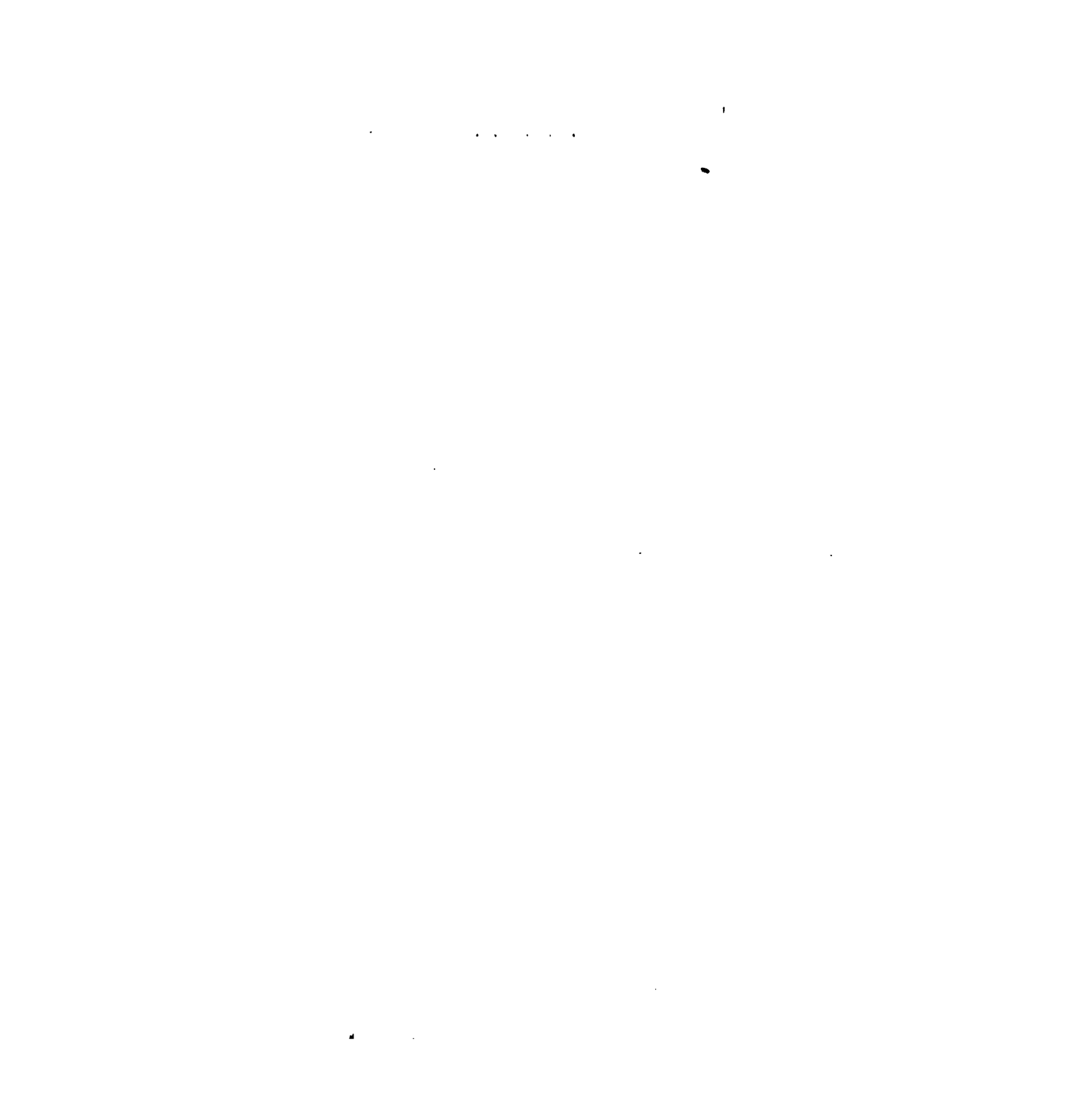
Is the Testator the Father of all these? Would He wish to have such a question accompanied with uncertainty? If any doubt should arise, would He not be anxious to have it dissipated as speedily as possible? Would He leave any *real* child long in suspense? Surely, then, we may come boldly to the throne of grace in this behalf.



## THE TESTING

1. What Wilt Thou?
2. Loaves and Fishes
3. The Mind of Christ
4. The Four Births
5. The Preciousness of Christ
6. The Religious Emotions
7. The Everlasting Life





## IV

### THE TESTING

Are the very many, who now profess to be the ransomed of the Lord, and to have the consolation of a hope sure and steadfast, what they profess to be, and doubtless think they are?

Has provision been made for thoroughly testing the quality of all such professions; to the intent that no sincere person may be self-deceived, and no insincere person may go unmasked?

1. A very remarkable case, that of Saul of Tarsus, the sometime persecutor and afterwards the chiefest apostle, suggests a test, that, though simple and easily applied, is yet of a most decisive character.

To find out a ransom for such a man, with such antecedents, was indeed a great marvel, yet it followed the general law of rescue under the scheme God had devised and put in operation on a large scale after Christ's ascension.

We are sure no one ever questioned the soundness of this man's conversion. It was as sound as it was sudden. If we peruse the record of

the change wrought in him as authorized by himself, for the purpose of ascertaining the precise juncture at which he became a Christian, we shall doubtless all agree, that the initial step was taken when he asked, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

The question itself—asked after his mind had passed through a rapid process of conviction the peculiar features of which are not to be reproduced, and so may not be regarded as a criterion of what the preparatory work in other minds should be—the question itself is a model one, fit to be asked by every sinful man as he contemplates entering upon the Christian life; and one when asked in sincerity, significant of a change of character as radical as that which it marked in the history of the man of Tarsus.

Observe, the question was not, what shall I *believe*? He was fully persuaded by what had just transpired, that He who had put him under sudden arrest, and had demanded why he was persecuting Him in the person of His followers, was none other than the true Messiah; and, with this persuasion, there came naturally a painful sense of his own sinfulness—the sharp pang of conviction.

Nor yet, did the question have to do with *motives*. He did not stop to analyze his motives, to see whether they were simple or complex, whether there was an admixture of selfishness or whether they were purely disinterested, whether he was impelled by fear or was constrained by love.

These are doubtless important questions for moral philosophers to raise, discuss, and settle; but they are no such questions as a convicted sinner need puzzle his brain with.

The practical question, and the most befitting for such an one as he to ask, was the one which first presented itself: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And he did not suggest what he would like to do, or what he thought he had a peculiar talent for, and could do well. Nor did he seek to know what reward he should have—how much of present enjoyment or future bliss. Much less did he stipulate that he should receive his reward in advance, and as a condition of rendering any service whatever.

We speak of this question as a model one—a question which, when sincerely asked, is significant of a radical change of character. If this estimate of its importance be correct, then the

results to the person asking it, and to the cause of Christ, are of moment.

In its bearings upon religion itself, as indicating its leading characteristic, is not service rendered to Christ the true ideal of a religious life? Service, rather than conviction in some certain form or degree; service, rather than feelings of a peculiar variety or intensity; service, rather than some certain degree of purity and strength of motive; service, rather than any undue anxiety for what may be of embarrassments in the Christian race, or for its final outcome. Is it not service that Christ requires? And consequently, is it not both right and safe for a man to be anxious only to serve Him faithfully? In such service will not there be found all needed conviction, all desirable emotions, all requisite purity of motive, and a firm, unfaltering hope of heaven? Take from the Christian religion this element and what is there left save a mere shell? "If," says a popular writer, "I were going to name the Christian Church at large, I would be disposed to call it, 'The Society for Obeying Christ.' To get Christ obeyed, rather than getting men saved is its mission. It is a more wholesome way of conceiving the fact, to put Christ first, and man second. Men will be saved

all the more surely, if what we aim at is getting them to obey Christ. Nobody will be saved that will not obey Him. Everybody will be saved that does obey Him."

If this question indicates the true ideal of religion, as consisting chiefly in service, then it must also indicate, not obscurely, what is the character of the person asking it in sincerity. Hence it may be confidently affirmed, that a *willingness* to submit to the authority of Christ, and receive the law for the regulation of his conduct at His mouth is the surest and most satisfactory evidence of true piety. We are confident in making this assertion, because it is so abundantly fortified by the testimony of God's word.

Obedience is therein recognized as "better than sacrifice." "The willing and obedient" are promised "the good of the land." God's complaint is frequent and sore against those who "hear His words and do them not."


But it was left for Christ to emphasize the true doctrine on this subject, which He did, in such words as these: "He that hath My commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will

manifest Myself to him," "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine *and doeth them*, I will liken unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock; and every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, *and doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Now, who need seek, or seeking, can hope to find a surer and more satisfactory test of character than this which Christ applies?

Advancing another step, there need be no hesitation in affirming the entire safety of all who can abide this test, of all who sincerely ask, "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" *i. e.*, ask it with the full and hearty purpose to do, and to do promptly, and cheerfully, and exactly, what Christ shall reveal as His will. He who does the will of Christ, has built his house




upon the rock, and not upon the sand. He may therefore dismiss all anxiety in regard to his present acceptance or his future blessedness. Both are assured beyond a peradventure.

But, how are the interests of Christ's kingdom affected by the asking of this question? How were they affected by Paul's asking it? What a burnished instrument he immediately became in the hands of his Lord for the promotion of that kingdom in the world! We now see that that question was the earnest of his most useful life. How different would have been his career, if his first inquiry had been like that of so many: "Lord, have I been convicted enough?" "Do I feel as I ought to feel?" "Are my motives what they should be?" "Shall I certainly hold out to the end?" "Shall I reach heaven at last?"

Paul started right. The very first tone of the new life within him, showed that the willing instrument was at concert pitch.

We do not suppose every man can be as efficient as was Paul, yet, we fully believe that every convert to Christianity may take on his spirit, and do very much to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom among men. If every convert was eager to learn, at the very outset of





his religious life, what Christ had for him to *do*, rather than what He had for him to *enjoy*; and if, when work was assigned him, he would set about it, with as much downright earnestness as Paul did, there would be signs of progress everywhere. The leaven of the kingdom would spread in every direction among the masses of mankind. There would be a commotion in every place where there was a Christian Church, or the nucleus of one.

Whether, therefore, we consider this question as indicating the true ideal of the Christian life, or as the touchstone of Christian character, or estimate the results of sincerely asking it to the individual or to the kingdom of Christ, it appears to be one of great testing power. It is, we doubt not, a question which Christ is more concerned to have asked than any other pertaining to the religious life. To ask employment at His hands, is to become identified with His kingdom, and to secure the position, the recognition, and the reward of His servants.

If our conception of the nature of religion is the correct one, then, if men render no service to Christ, they cannot be truly religious in the Gospel sense. Certain it is, that one who, in building for eternity, omits Paul's question from



his list of inquiries, is leaving out of the arch its keystone. There is nothing yet in such an one's experience—nothing in all he has felt, nothing in all he has hoped, nothing in all he has promised to himself—that has any certain connection with the reward of the righteous.

We are not sure but that all our religious conferences should be so modified as to give this idea special prominence.


There was one memorable conference meeting of this sort, where Christ was present to hear the report of each disciple, as he came in with eyes glistening and heart all aglow. There was no need that any one of them should tell how he felt, as one by one to the number of threescore and ten they reported, "how the devils were subject unto them through His name." We wonder not, that, while, as if to point them to their greater reward, Christ bade them "rejoice because their names were written in heaven," the record adds significantly: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

2. On the day following that whereon the miracle of feeding five thousand men with five

barley loaves and two small fishes was wrought, the people, not finding Jesus where they expected, took shipping and came to Capernaum seeking Him. He, divining their motive, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Ye* seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves." They evidently hoped He would repeat the miracle of the day before, and furnish them another meal gratis.

They cared little or nothing for what the miracle signified, and what they might and should have learned from it concerning His character and mission. Provided they could secure the loaves, it was immaterial to them *how* or *why* they were furnished. The men of our day have, unwittingly perhaps, interpreted this rebuke of Christ, and woven that interpretation into their every-day judgments.

Speaking of those anxious for the success of parties, and working arduously for the elevation of certain men to office, they say, and the saying is one of reproach: "It is not that they care for the principles of the party, but they hope to obtain a fat place if this party wins, and these men are elected. They would not follow the fortunes of any party or any man were it not for the loaves." Thus the common rendering of the



sentiment, puts upon it the precise meaning Christ sought to convey in disapproval of the motive of those who were seeking Him in Capernaum—a disapproval which extends to all men, in every place, who are subject to the same low consideration. Hence, it is important to raise the question, who, in our day, are seeking Christ for the loaves?

(a) Surely, they are doing so who lose sight of the miracle of love and power, as a revealer of His character and mission. They are taken up with the feast gratuitously spread, and think neither of its expense nor of Him who has provided it.

The feeding of the five thousand was a marvel of compassion. A heart throbbing with pity, had prompted the generous deed. Evidently, Christ was able to be touched with a feeling for human want and woe, and so much He was anxious to have comprehended. It was vital to the success of His mission. The best type of humanity must be revealed in Him who was to be a sympathizing High Priest in things pertaining to God.


But another than He might have furnished two hundred pennyworth of barley loaves if sufficient time had been allowed, and the

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hunger of the multitude might have been as fully appeased. And so, we must look beyond the mere feeding to discover what was of far greater importance.

Five barley loaves and two small fishes constituted the whole supply of food accessible, and what were they among so many? As the men sat down, rank after rank upon the grass, it must have seemed to them like the enacting of a farce, when they considered how infinitesimal a morsel of the bread and fish would fall to their lot in the distribution. But, lo! after the giving of thanks, each one of the five thousand ate until he was filled; and there was gathered up of the fragments, over and above what was eaten, twelve baskets full. A miracle! Surely, a beneficent miracle wrought in the presence of five thousand witnesses. And for what purpose? Doubtless, that they might see the hand of God in it, and might be prepared the more fully to accredit Christ's testimony in regard to more serious matters.

But they are too sordid to think of anything beyond the good full meal they have gotten for nothing. The miracle is almost lost upon them, while the pleasurable sensation of sated appetite lingers. They wish only, that the morrow



would spread for them as bountiful a repast.

The miracle wrought in our day, is one by which Christ supplies the spiritual needs of thousands upon thousands without money and without price. The poverty of the human soul, the hunger that comes of it, the faintness that comes of this hunger in every successive generation, is relieved by Christ; and yet, after all have eaten and are filled, the supply seems larger than it was at the first. The fishes all so small, and the loaves all so few, are more than sufficient for the ever-increasing multitude. And this greatest miracle of all time is lost sight of by many, who think only of the personal benefit they have experienced. They never ask who or what the Being is, who fulfils such a ministry, or how it is that the supplies of grace are always proportionate to the demand. Neither do they ask at what expense so much favor is bestowed, and what return they ought to make to Christ, in view of His matchless kindness.

(b) Some never take into the account, what advantage He may and ought to derive from what He has wrought in man's behalf. In every miracle of mercy there are two interested parties, the miracle-worker and the person or

persons for whose benefit the miracle is wrought. The five thousand thought little or nothing of the advantage of the party of the first part. In resorting to Christ on the day following, they hoped to use Him for their own purposes. Except as He should minister to their appetite, He was nothing to them. If there were no loaves and fishes in the case, they would as soon have abode at home, or gone elsewhere.

In our day, the seeking of Christ that leaves His advantage out of the account, is prompted by the consideration, that He alone is authorized to furnish passports to the heavenly world. It is believed, and with reason, that whoever gains admission to that world, must enter by Him. They feel themselves shut up to this necessity. They will seek Christ rather than be excluded from the bliss and companionships of that world.

It is certainly foreign to their customary thought, that their admission to the heavenly world is to be an event that will enhance largely the glory of Christ—is to be His recompense for unexampled sufferings on man's behalf; and that the whole heavenly host will esteem that to be the fact of most absorbing interest, overshadowing all others. *They* are anxious that

He should "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." They rejoice over every jewel added to the crown of His rejoicing. They must look with displacency upon those sordid souls that seek Him only for the gain they imagine will accrue to themselves through His sacrifice.

Many others seek Christ in our day, because of the peace of mind, that cannot be found without Him. They would escape from the loathsomeness and slime of conscious moral debasement. They would rise into an atmosphere of purity, and regain their self-respect. They have heard Christ say, "My peace give I unto you, not as the world giveth." They have heard Him say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," and they seek Him for the peace and the rest. Securing these to-day, they are comforted, even as if they had been fed by miracle.

If the experience of to-day shall be repeated on the morrow, and on the day following, it may come to pass that this habit of seeking Christ for peace and rest will become fixed—a habit not to be spoken against, save as they fail, after the example of the nine lepers to give glory to God.

Failing in this, they fall under the classifica-





tion of reproach wherein Christ is sought for the loaves—sought as the lesser of two evils, as better than to endure the unrest, and discomfort and utter loathing that go to the state of condemnation.

(c) And there are those who to get on at all in religion, must have “ a good time,” and must never be crossed in their wishes. They drop out of religious convocations unless there is something to make them feel good. They require a great deal of nursing, not to say petting, to keep them from going astray. They are in their element amid the stir of revival scenes. Nothing else is, in their view, worthy of being regarded as first-class religion. The sure, though silent growth of religious character; the steadfastness of purpose, which neither summer’s heat nor winter’s cold can affect; the adding to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, which renders it certain that the believer shall prove neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to them a matter of small moment. A gust of feeling, an outburst of religious enthusiasm, a tidal

wave of excitement that quickens the pulse and sends the arterial blood throbbing through the veins with unwonted vigor, is to them the great desideratum, which will carry them farther on toward the heavenly country in a week, than the slow plodding gait of a staid Christianity in years.

(d) And there are yet others who are after "the hundredfold more in this present time," without "the persecutions." That the hundredfold more *with* persecutions proffered by Christ, is a legitimate motive to use in persuading men to embrace Him, is freely admitted. But without the persecutions it never is. It is rather a misleading motive and so a dangerous one. Yet how many freely use it, evidently under the impression that with those who shrink from entering upon a religious life because of the bill of costs no other motive would be effectual. But by leaving so much out of the disagreeable things that should legitimately go with that life, the question at issue becomes almost a one-sided affair.

Hence the unwillingness to go to Christ in the first instance is almost or quite overcome. A world of disappointment awaits such persons in the not distant future; for, the effects of the

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miracle of to-day will have been spent ere the morrow. If Christ sends them away empty, refusing to minister to the sordidness of their desires, they are greatly surprised. If tribulations are added, and their association with Christian men exposes them to reproach and loss, they are more than surprised; they are vexed with themselves, angry with others, and unhesitatingly turn their backs upon the institutions of the Gospel. They regard themselves as the victims of a religious swindle, and blame indiscriminately all the parties that had anything to do with their admission into the Christian Church.


The offer of the loaves as the chief inducement to a religious life, proceeds from an utterly mistaken notion of what is most essential to such a life. The loaves may serve as a *bait*, but they are not the *bread* that cometh down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall never hunger. Christ, rather than the loaves, is that bread. The loaves are but an incident, illustrative of His power and compassion.

If it is a reproach in politics to espouse the cause of a party for the sake of an office, and if we are permitted to rejoice over the discomfiture of those who are influenced by so base a motive,

why should not a like motive in religion be a reproach? And why should not a failure to secure the object for which they have striven selfishly be regarded with indifference? If, in the one case, character is tainted, why not in the other? Is a sacred regard for the principles of our holy religion any less commendable than a like regard for the principles of any political organization?

The persons who seek Christ under the influence of a sordid motive are utterly unreliable. If they don't get the loaves, they will forsake Him. Take away the present and personal advantage, whatever it may be, and you take away all inducement to follow Him.

Electing the service of Christ for the honor and privilege that are in it; electing it for its reasonableness; electing it because it is the service which conscience approves; electing it because they can in no other way act the part of honest men, by being true to their convictions; electing it because they cannot otherwise be obedient to rightful authority, or be useful in the highest degree—they know nothing of such an election. The answer of Daniel's three friends, "If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery fur-



nace; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not worship the golden image thou hast set up," conveys an idea of religion, which is utterly foreign to anything they have experienced.

3. A contrast is sometimes extremely useful in making up a true estimate of character. Over against the selfish man, whose desire to be saved may be stimulated to such a degree as to become like the clutch of some frenzied wretch, who pinions with a death-grip the strong right arm whose free stroke is all that keeps him from sinking into the watery abyss; or the man of brawn who springs into the life-boat, and casts off the ropes, while helpless women and children crowd the bulwark, we present a contrast in the man Christ Jesus, and affirm in the words of the apostle to the Gentiles:


*"If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His."*

And this same apostle, elsewhere (Phil. 2: 5-8. 2 Cor. 8: 9.), sets forth in detail the distinctive features of the Christ-spirit in these words: "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with



God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name." "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might become rich."

He made Himself of no reputation, or, as in the revision, emptied Himself. This, and all else that He did in the same line, being entirely voluntary on His part. A vast deal was involved in this emptying of Himself, for He was in the form of God originally, and so thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Whatever belonged to the estate of the "King immortal, invisible, the only wise God," belonged of right also to Him. He occupied the highest social position in the heavenly places. His name was influential above every name in those places. The deference paid to His every word and wish was universal. But for man's sake, He stepped down from the throne, and from the midst of all the regal splendor of that estate. He emp-




tied Himself of the glory He had with His Father before the world was. When, under compulsion, earthly monarchs do the like, the coming-down is wonderful, and they find it hard to accommodate themselves to their changed environment. But, when He, upon whose vesture and thigh is written, "King of kings and Lord of lords," empties Himself of the glory He had with His Father, who can comprehend the vastness of the sacrifice? So thoroughly had He emptied Himself in this voluntary abdication, that His own chosen people saw nothing in Him but "a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, and with no beauty that they should desire Him." They treated Him as an impostor; spurned His authority; and with instant and loud voices demanded and secured His crucifixion. But, while disrobing Himself of the glory He had with His Father, He might have taken on the form of some other exalted intelligence—angel, archangel, or seraph—and so have commanded a profounder reverence than any human being.

But no. He was found in fashion as a man, with no angelic halo about His brow to reveal His eminence. His fashion was that of an ordinary man. He wore no regalia. The bor-

der of His garment was not enlarged beyond what was common. He was innocent of phylacteries to mark the degree of His sanctity. It was necessary that John should designate Him as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, and even then, only two of His disciples saw enough in Him to excite their curiosity and lead to further investigations.

But, He might have been found in fashion as a man, and yet not have still further abased Himself by taking upon Him the form of a servant. He wished it understood, that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He sought in a very practical way, to impress upon His disciples the fact, that He was among them as one that serveth. In girding Himself with a towel, and taking a basin of water, and washing their feet, the form of a servant was clearly revealed. To comprehend the full import of what is involved in taking on the form of a servant, we must reduce ourselves to that condition. The loss of reputation, to say nothing of the many other things involved in that condition, causes us to shrink from it. We take good care not to be suspected unnecessarily of associating with an inferior class, a class low down






on the social scale, as low as—well, a servant. We wish it to be well understood, that we are *not* among our fellow men as those who serve. To take a servant's place, wear a servant's livery, do a servant's work, and receive a servant's pay—ah, we are above all that! If ever surprised in a servant's garb, girded with a towel, and carrying a basin of water, and doing, or about to do, a servant's work, how many of us would experience the most intense mortification? How many live beyond their means or live upon others' earnings, to keep up the delusion that they are not at service, even in their own homes, saying nothing of the homes of other people.

But the servant's fare joined to the servant's place, to come down to a social level with the lowliest; how hard to bring ourselves into a frame of mind to endure that, and endure it cheerfully, nay, to prefer such a lot to the one in which we were, perhaps, born and have lived all our days—a lot of plenty, amid luxurious surroundings with servants at our bidding. With how bad a grace would we gird ourselves with a towel, and, taking a basin of water, wash the disciples feet! We might make a virtue of necessity, but if left to follow our own impul-

ses, how many of us would have the mind of Christ Jesus?

“He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” This is the most extraordinary thing of all, for this implies a willingness to suffer intensely, and suffer ignominiously on man’s behalf. There might be circumstances under which we would consent to lay aside the purple, and submit to be reduced in our eminence; but when it came to a question of becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, of suffering such a death as a malefactor, whose mind is equal to that? All this, however, was calmly contemplated by Christ as certain to follow, in case He stepped down from the throne.

But there is another phase of this subject presented in the words: “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich.” To become poor, as poor as Christ became, that is bad: to become poor, after being rich as Christ had been, that is worse: but to see others growing rich at our expense, how could we endure that! The riches of our Lord Jesus Christ antecedent to His incarnation, who can compute?



In whatever they consisted, their value to Him must have been very great, and the sacrifice involved in allowing Himself to be dispossessed of them, was one as keenly felt by Him as it could have been by any one of us. The deprivation to which He submitted was not in itself desirable. Poverty, whether considered in the light of the loss of worldly wealth, or comfort, or fame, or friendship, was as great an inconvenience to Him as it would be to us; nay, in view of the heavenly estate with which it was necessarily contrasted, it was infinitely greater. Yet He willingly became poor that we through His poverty might become rich.


And He could *enjoy* the sight of a prosperity that came to men as the result of His own impoverishment. We are not ambitious to resemble Him in this particular. We study not how others may become rich at our expense. It would require a large supply of grace to be good-natured and happy, if others were using us as stepping-stones to their own advancement.

Hence, the proposal that we should come down from the social eminence to which riches have advanced us, and go among the lowly of earth in order to elevate them materially, socially, and morally, meets a cold response. We

cannot bring our minds into a frame to make so great a sacrifice, but leave that for others, whose preferences are not so decided as our own. We must have congenial surroundings, and be indulged in our preferences, or we can never be happy, or even contented.

Ah, but is that the same mind that was in Christ Jesus? Are we at liberty to have a mind so entirely out of harmony with His? In one sense we are—we are free agents, free to refuse the good and choose the evil—but if we are His disciples, and subject to His control, we are not thus at liberty. The disciple should be *as* his master. And so we are brought face to face with the declaration: "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." His spirit in any man will incite him to an emptying of self, will create a willingness to be found in fashion as a man of low degree—a man claiming nothing on the score of birth, or social elevation, or superior culture—to take upon himself the form of a servant, filling the place, wearing the livery, doing the work, accepting the wages of a servant, and receiving at the hands of men a treatment, that, saving only the outward symbol, has in it all the elements of a crucifixion.

Sometimes His real disciples seem to be



making large sacrifices when they are found emptying themselves of their human ambitions, and becoming in very deed, as in profession, the faithful followers of Jesus. But just so surely as "God hath," as a reward for humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, "highly *exalted* Him, and given Him a name that is above every name," will He also exalt those who are His imitators. Having suffered with Him, they shall also reign with Him amid the splendors of the heavenly world.

4. At the night interview with Nicodemus, Christ announced with distinct emphasis, the necessity of the new birth, a change wrought on the spirit of man by the Spirit of God. Ever since that interview, the words, "Ye *must* be born again," have had a profound significance as a legitimate test of character. But a suspicion has been aroused—the ground whereof being a lamentable want of evidence of the change in the lives of many who profess to have experienced it—that something has been mistaken for it.

Some light, perhaps all the case requires, is shed on this subject by words in the Gospel according to John: "But as many as received

Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Here are enumerated four kinds of birth: the last, the birth of God, being set over against three other births with which it may be, and doubtless often is confounded. We may presume that in all such cases there has been no deliberate purpose, or even wish, to become the victim of deception. More likely it has resulted from a lack of careful discrimination between things that are radically different. Some sort of change had taken place, and what was it? It certainly could not have been the birth of God in any who have not received Christ—a reception that concedes all the claims He makes for Himself, claims substantiated by miracles and attested by a voice from heaven, saying: "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." If the change was not the birth of God, which of the other births named was it?

1. "*Born not of blood.*" The Israelites in Christ's day claimed relationship to God as children, on the ground that they were Abram's seed—a claim disallowed of Christ, who declared that, despite their blood-relationship to Abra-

ham, they were, in character, of their father the devil, and were doing his will. It is quite possible that this same delusion has survived in some form until the present day, and that other than the descendants of Abraham are under its spell. For, is there not great store set by the fact—an honorable fact in itself—that we came of a godly ancestry, and for that reason are entitled to special privileges in the household of faith? Without waiting for some sure sign of grace to pave the way for admission to the visible Church, how often is the fact of baptism in early childhood under a parental covenant looked upon as a saving ordinance, as perhaps the equivalent of regeneration, or as regeneration itself. Hence, persons growing up under such a system, are apt to claim for themselves and for their offspring the right of Christian ordinances, virtually on the line of blood.


The membership of some churches is largely made up of those who can give no intelligent account of their conversion, if, indeed, they recognize the necessity of any such change.

How much of wood, hay, stubble, is found in such a membership, it is impossible to determine. But the same liability to deception that existed in the Jewish Church in the time of



Christ, exists still in the communions that make no account of the necessity of something more than what is derived from a pious ancestry, near or remote, and the outward formulas that have given them a standing in the visible Church—that something being the change wrought by the Spirit of God in regeneration, without which no man can even see the kingdom of God.

2. Born "*not of the will of the flesh.*" This must refer to the change possible to any man in his unregenerate state, or while he is under the dominion of the law of sin in his members. "*To will*" is present with every such man, and, at times, he wills with vigor and honesty of purpose. It is vitally important he should so will. All truly born-of-God men do so will. But he must not confound this change of purpose, possible to any man, with the birth from God. For, he will be sure to find, that, notwithstanding the vigor and sincerity of his willing, how to *perform* the good is quite another thing. He will find himself dropping back from that state of religiousness, and out of the service into which his will has carried him. The instruction which has led to such a birth is well enough. It was the right thing for him to





resolve to change his course—to make up his mind to serve God henceforth. So far, so good. But is that all? It is all in the experience of multitudes. No other change, so far as they are aware, has taken place in them. They may suspect that something more is wanting, and that that something is vital.


The general relapse following such a birth is significant. It looks as if there was nothing but the will of the flesh. Their religious experience is accurately delineated in the seventh chapter of Romans, and in the single but significant phrase, “How to perform that which is good I find not.”

3. “*Nor of the will of man*”—not the will of the man who is the subject of the birth, but of the man who is the agent in producing it.

Some men have a wonderfully constraining, an almost irresistible influence over others, especially over the young. They are fascinating in their address and skillful in the use of motives that appeal to the imagination and excite the sensibilities. Many evangelists, and some pastors, are remarkably successful in convert-making. Scores, hundreds, even thousands are persuaded by their public and personal appeals, to commit themselves, by some outward

manifestation of interest, to a religious life, or, at least, to a desire to lead such a life; and this manifestation is regarded by many as tantamount to a full and final commitment to such a life, which may properly be supplemented by admission to the Church. That step having been taken, the question of their salvation is settled. The seriousness of the step they have taken, or are about to take, through the persuasion of the man who has acquired such an influence over them, and to whom they imagine they owe so much, is not considered. They wish to please the man whose converts they are. They are willing to follow, and do, in fact, follow him. It is not Christ they are enamored of and follow. Drop out the man and they drop out.

We think we do not exaggerate when we say, that a very large number of admissions to the Church in these days are of persons born of the will of man. And in saying this, we do not undervalue the importance of the human instrumentality in the conversion of men. It is God's purpose that men should be saved through the use of this instrumentality. But man is only an instrument, and after he has exhausted his powers of persuasion, and has apparently been



successful, it remains to be said, that the change wrought by the Spirit of God in regeneration may not have taken place. The old nature may still be in the ascendant, and, if so, a relapse is sure to follow. And it is in this state of relapse that so many, in and out of the Church, are found, whose character is so unsatisfactory that we must believe there has been no saving change wrought in them.

4, "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*"—a birth whose transformatory power is so great that old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new.

The features which distinguish this birth from the three births with which it is contrasted are clearly the following:

(1) It is a change wrought upon the spiritual nature of man, by the Spirit of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The spirit is that which alone can be the subject of the change wrought in regeneration.

(2) The change is *radical*. It is a making of the tree good, that the fruit may be good also. It is an eradication of the old nature and a substitution of the new "which after God is

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created in righteousness and true holiness."

(3) It impresses God's image upon the man, so that in the elements of character he is Godlike.

(4) The change must have and does have *permanency*. The feet taken out of the horrible pit and from the miry clay, "are set upon a rock, and their goings established."

The beginning of confidence is held "steadfast unto the end." Predestinated, justified, glorified, are the transactions which ensure permanency. The good work begun, is carried forward unto a perfect consummation.

It is plainly a matter of the very last importance, that all who hope in the mercy of God should ask whether the change they have experienced is the birth of God. Anything short of that birth will certainly fail to meet the necessities of the case; anything short of that will be disappointing. In what God does in this matter He acts the part of a Sovereign, but not of an arbitrary Sovereign. He has made all to hinge upon a reasonable condition, the reception of his Son as the propitiatory sacrifice. "To as many as receive Him," and to none others, gives He power to become His children—a power imparted, doubtless, on the instant the act of receiving is complete.

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The change He makes is not a proper subject of human analysis; it cannot be resolved into its elements; it is not even a matter of human observation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The reality, as well as the quality of the change—that which differentiates it from the other births—is known to men by its fruits. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."


5. The *preciousness* of Christ is revealed only to faith—simple, childlike faith.

His preciousness is not revealed to a vain *curiosity*. There are inquisitive persons, who without any special motive are prying into every matter, great or small. A trick of the necromancer, a phenomenon of science, or a mystery of religion, has equal power to entice them into a vigorous effort to ascertain *how* the thing is done.

And so, when they hear of the preciousness

of Christ, they are eager to learn what that means, and set their wits to work to find out. They ask many questions of those who are presumed to be in the secret. They put this thing and that together; they compare the views of different sects; they study the life of Christ; they analyze the structure of His kingdom as set forth in His teachings, hoping ever to evolve the mystery. But their curiosity goes unsatisfied. Christ's preciousness is not revealed to them. Ere they can know Him as He is, they must prosecute their search with a very different spirit.

Nor is His preciousness revealed to human *philosophy*. There is, doubtless, a philosophy of the highest order in religion—a philosophy of the plan of redemption through Jesus Christ—but it is a philosophy higher than any human wisdom. The human intellect, working independently of God, arguing from its own hypotheses, can never solve the mystery of redeeming love. Nay, more, if guided in its reasonings by the lamp of revelation, its conclusions should harmonize with the true theory of the redemptive scheme, and should be pronounced orthodox in all its essential characteristics, yet to him who has but philosophized,



there is no such revelation of Christ to the soul as would be accounted precious. The intellect is all right, but the heart is all unwarmed.

Philosophy among the ancient Greeks had attained its highest successes, and yet the apostle declares that the Gospel which is the wisdom and power of God unto salvation, was to them *foolishness*. Had they accepted the Christian theory, it would have been in their hands nothing more than a religious manikin—it would have needed to have breathed into it a living soul.


Nor yet is His preciousness revealed to human *science*. Science has done many things, and done them well. It has solved many problems which for ages baffled the most skillful investigators. It has made many useful discoveries, and has multiplied greatly the facilities for doing almost everything that needs to be done. Science, moreover, has proved itself, in instances not a few, to be "the handmaid of religion." It has illustrated and confirmed many of the most important facts of the inspired volume. It has often plagued those who sought to use it in the service of unbelief, as the ark of God did the Philistines.

And yet, notwithstanding all science has done,

it has never revealed to any man the preciousness of Christ. Not by melting in the crucible, nor by quarrying in the mine; not by soaring above the heights of the clouds and searching the constellations of heaven; not by sounding the ocean's depths and exploring its mysterious caverns, can man learn what is revealed *only* to faith.

The preciousness of Christ is not revealed to *religious formalism*. The Jewish people were remarkable for their close attention to all the external rites and ceremonies of religion, yet Christ was to them *a stumbling block*; and the straitest of their sects seemed to reverence Him the least. They saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. And religious formalists now are equally obtuse. They never speak of Christ in any such terms as to lead others to think He had endeared Himself to them, and sustained to them the tenderest relations.

But in what respects is Christ precious to those who believe? The term "precious," has two significations, both of which are essential. That which is costly, provided at great sacrifice, and that which is greatly endeared to us, a separation from which would cause us extreme pain and positive unhappiness, is precious.





'Tis possible, however, that the very costliness of an object may be an insuperable barrier to our obtaining it. It costs too much for our means, and so we can never experience the satisfaction derived from actual possession. *Others* may enjoy it, but *we*—never. Now, in a very important sense, Christ is a boon to man of priceless value. The cost to heaven and to Himself of working out the redemptive scheme was infinite. No man could render Him an equivalent for the sacrifice made in his behalf; and yet, he is not excluded from any of the benefits of Christ's redeeming work. All there is in Him is freely proffered, and he may appropriate all, and welcome, even though he were the poorest of the poor.

But in what *respects* is Christ precious to the believer? Our answer, in brief, is, in every respect in which one being can be precious to another.

His name and word and works, but more especially the *relations* He sustains to believers are precious—relations that meet every conceivable exigency of their earthly experience. He is their King to rule over them in righteousness; their Mediator to stand between them and the offended Lawgiver; their Advocate to

plead their cause in the court of last resort; their Propitiation; their Surety; their Passover; the Captain of their salvation.

In these, and many like precious relations, He has been wont to reveal Himself, and in all of them He has been proven in the experience of those who believe.

Hence, the testing quality of this phase of our subject is of a very decisive character.

From the showing had, the larger inference is that they cannot be true believers to whom the preciousness of Christ, in the respects indicated, has not been revealed. They may know a great deal about philosophy, they may be well versed in science, they may be well read in the theology of the schools and in the literature of the Holy Scriptures, but they know nothing yet of experimental religion as they ought to know it, and as others, much inferior to themselves in general information, do know it. Possibly, they may deride the suggestion, that there are any revelations made to the hearts of men through faith, which are not comprehensible to the intellect pure and simple, but they are surely judging of things beyond their measure. They will find it written for their admonition, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to

nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Inasmuch as the preciousness of Christ is revealed only to faith, every man's first duty is to believe—not to philosophize, nor to theorize. He is not prepared to reason correctly on the subject of religion, unless he is sure of the correctness of his premises. If they are wrong his reasonings are false, and his conclusions unreliable. And his premises *are* wrong if the preciousness of Christ is not admitted. Yet, how can this admission be secured, unless His preciousness has been revealed to faith? The first thing then is to *believe*—to accept as true the record God has given of His Son, and to receive that Son as a personal, and sufficient and only Savior.

As faith increases, it is reasonable to presume, that the revelation Christ makes of Himself to the soul becomes more vivid, and He will be more and more precious, and the object of a warmer and steadier devotion.

A third inference equally legitimate is, that those to whom Christ is precious *are precious*

to Him. The affection which goes out to Him from the believer is fully reciprocated. If His name, His Word, His work, if all that pertains to Him, is a source of delight, a spring of joy, he need not go one step further to search for evidence of Christ's affection for him. "I love them that love me."

6. In pursuing the previous train of thought it has not been lost sight of, that there is a liability to misconception as to the term "precious," some confounding it with what is emotional in religious experience; and hence, if the emotion is lacking, they conclude they cannot
- endure the test propounded.

Wherefore, it is expedient that just here some clear thought should be injected into the discussion in regard to the *religious emotions*.

An emotion, according to Webster, is "any agitation of the mind or excitement of the sensibilities." Kane, in his *Elements of Criticism*, defines emotion philosophically as "an internal motion or agitation of the mind which passes away without desire."

To the question, what is the nature of the relation which the religious emotions sustain to genuine Christian character and experience, we answer:

(1) It is the relation of a *consequent* to its *antecedent*. Repentance, submission, faith is the antecedent, and emotion is the consequent. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." "Believing we rejoice." Some religious exercise always goes *before* the genuine religious emotion.

(2) It is the relation of an *effect* to its *cause*. "These things," said Christ, "have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The spoken words of Christ are the cause of joyful emotions in His disciples. "Did not our hearts burn within us as He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

(3) It is the relation of *the thing produced* to the *producer*. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc.

(4) The relation is *involuntary*. No man can will himself directly into an emotion. And it is questionable whether a genuine religious emotion can be indirectly awakened by any sort of religious exercise, so long as that exercise is engaged in with the avowed intent of exciting the sensibilities.


If, therefore, emotions are involuntary states, then are they not essential, or, if essential, not

indispensible to Christian character, and genuine religious experience.

(5) And this leads to the further inference, that the relation is not one of *necessity*. That is to say, a man may be a true Christian, and in a state of acceptance with God, and yet, for the time, be sensible of no emotion. The consequent may not follow its antecedent. The cause may not produce its ordinary effect. The discharge of Christian duty, the active religious life, may not be attended with joyous emotions.

This position may be confirmed by showing: That there are emotions corresponding to the religious, which may not be truly religious emotions; and that there may be, and actually is piety most undoubted, where desirable emotions are wanting.

The same tale of suffering—the story of the cross if you please—affects regenerate and unregenerate alike. Both weep at the recital. Nay, the latter may weep profusely, while the former cannot weep at all and laments bitterly his inability to do so. Both alike are conscious of emotions of gratitude to God for signal benefits. Indeed, the unregenerate may outrival the regenerate in his expressions of thankfulness. And yet, while the goodness of God leads the



latter to repentance, the same goodness confirms the former in impenitence.

Both alike may feel a deep abhorrence of certain forms of wickedness. An act of paltry meanness, or some flagrant outrage upon the rights and liberties of the people, will excite intense indignation in their bosoms, and it will be difficult to say whose indignation burns the more fiercely.


Both alike experience complacent emotions in what pertains to God. In Scripture, the wicked are represented as *taking delight* in knowing God's ways (Isa. 58: 2.), and in approaching to Him.

In the reminiscences of Dr. Payson's conversations with his daughter, written by the latter, occurs a passage, that will appropriately supplement this phase of our subject.

The daughter had for a long time been in an inquiring frame of mind, when the wishes of her father were gratified and his prayers answered by witnessing among his people indications of the Spirit's presence—indications which soon ripened into an extensive revival.

The joy of the father was, of course, very great, and was shared by the daughter to a remarkable degree. The following conversation

soon took place, the daughter introducing it by saying: "I don't see why I should be so glad to have people converted, if I am not a Christian, though I don't think I am one." The father replied, "It is not at all uncommon for the children of pious parents to have such feelings. You, for instance, know that it is my desire to have my people converted, and that nothing gives me so much joy as to have them choose Christ for their portion and friend. Now it is very natural that your love for me should lead you to sympathize in my joy. You are glad when you hear of instances of conversion, just as you would be glad of any other mercy I should receive." Resuming the conversation soon after, the daughter said: "Don't you remember when you went out into our garden one evening, you talked to us about the flowers and the stars? It was a beautiful evening, and the air was soft and balmy; and I remember you said, how happy must that person be who can look up to heaven and say, my Father made them all. And then, I had a strange feeling that made the tears come into my eyes, and it seemed as if I loved God and loved to look up to heaven and call Him my Father."






"These feelings," was the reply, "are such as any person may have under such circumstances. I have explained to you what is meant by emotions of beauty and sublimity. Now, when these emotions are strongly excited, as for instance, when a man looks on a lofty precipice, a foaming cataract, or a beautiful landscape, his whole soul is moved and softened; and if, at that moment, his thoughts are directed to God, he thinks of Him as the author of all that beauty and sublimity which makes him so happy, and his heart swells with emotions which he mistakes for gratitude and love. This has been felt a thousand times by men of cultivated taste. But if God be presented to them as a being of unswerving justice, who will by no means clear the guilty, they are disgusted, and ready to say: 'Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' " To how many might these words be appropriately addressed? "Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

On the other hand, there may be, and actually is, piety most undoubted, while the

desired emotions are wanting. Edwards remarks: "I do not think that religion in the heart is ever in exact proportion to the degree of affection and present emotion of the mind: for, undoubtedly, there is much emotion in real saints which is not spiritual. The degree of religion is rather to be judged by the *fixedness and strength of the habit*, than by the degree of the present exercise; and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to the hurry, vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts." To this may be added the weightier testimony of inspiration: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant (Christ) that walketh in darkness (for the time being) and hath no light. (An abnormal emotional condition, the prescription for which follows.) Let him trust in the name of the Lord (or in what that name stands for) and stay upon His God," as one weary and faint might lean upon a staff.

The absence of joyful emotion or darkness, may arise from other causes than sin.

It may arise from a physical derangement of some sort. While we would like to think the mind has always the mastery over the body,



yet it is certain that "causes apparently the most trivial—an overheated room, a sunless day, a northern exposure—will make all the difference between happiness and unhappiness, between faith and doubt, between courage and indecision." These causes affect the condition of the human body, disturbing its normal functions, and so affect the mind which is more or less in sympathy. Morbid tendencies and those forms of disease which induce languor and general debility, are likely to produce spiritual depression. A good tonic for the physical man will restore light to the darkened soul independent of any spiritual ministrations. Were we to inquire of a large class, who, according to their own confession, are subject to the vicissitudes of an ever changing experience, now being in Beulah land and now in the slough of Despond, we would find that their hours of darkness are contemporaneous with their hours of physical prostration. The instant their strength is rallied, their joyousness of spirit returns.

"Last night I weighed quite wearied out  
The question that perplexes still;  
And that sad spirit we call doubt  
Made the good naught beside the ill.  
This morning, when with rested mind

I try again the selfsame theme,  
The whole is altered, and I find  
The balance turned, the good supreme.  
A little sleep, a brief night's rest  
Has changed the look of all that is!  
Sure, any creed I hold at best  
Needs humble holding after this."

That which we call darkness may arise from false views—from confounding sin with temptation; from laying too much stress upon certain evidences of regeneration; from accepting as tests of character what is compatible only with exigencies that have not yet been a part of their experience, and may never be; from inferring they must have made such attainments as those who have been long in the Christian life.

Ignorance of God's ways often engenders darkness. Too apt are men to lose sight of the fact that He "leadeth the blind by a way they know not, and in paths they have not known." By deferring blessings, and disappointing hopes, He tries them; and they conclude that He is displeased with them—a conclusion that allows no place for discipline, or for the trial of faith which is more precious than gold when tried in the fire. Great distresses may envelope the soul in intensest gloom. Job says: "Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with His net. He hath fenced up my way

that I cannot pass, and He hath set darkness in my paths." Jeremiah laments: "I am a man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out: He hath made my chain heavy. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone: He hath made my paths crooked. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He hath made me desolate." The dying exclamation of Jesus—"My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" indicated an experience of intense darkness; and yet the hiding of His Father's countenance, had in it no suggestion of His displeasure.

While it must be maintained, that, as a rule, emotion attends the consistent Christian course, as an effect, result, or consequent of pursuing that course, still the exceptions are so numerous as to make it utterly unsafe to rely on the emotions, alone or principally, either as evidence for or against true piety and present acceptance with God.


7. The conception of the life everlasting, as a something that begins *beyond* the grave, is

evidently a mistaken one. That life is entered upon and developed here. Hence, it may be known in this world who have in them the throbbings of such a life—a life that no single phrase, even of Scriptural origin, can define fully and satisfactorily. God, in His infinite wisdom, does not embrace all in a single statement. And yet, any one out of a number of Scriptural statements may serve as an index of a life which in its make-up is a consistent whole, with some marked feature in the experience of every individual who has entered upon it.

The affirmation of some single fact of the everlasting life, and that fact only, implies no contradiction of some other fact which appertains to that life, but has not yet come to be a matter of individual consciousness.

I am safely housed under the friendly roof of a spacious mansion, and yet have been admitted to only one of its numerous apartments.

Another guest, from another apartment of the same mansion, may meet me in the common dining-hall, which he has entered by a different door from that by which I gained admission—a door leading to an entirely distinct suite of rooms, perhaps rooms on a more elevated plane, and overlooking a far more extensive landscape.



Still, we are both in the same house, enjoying the same hospitality, partaking of the same nutritious diet, and sharing the same essential privileges, save that, in the assignment of quarters, the host hath exercised his own judgment in locating one here, and one there. Perhaps, he will allow us ere long, the freedom of the house, and then, at will, we may enter and explore other apartments. But, in any event, we may compare notes, revealing each to the other, the discoveries we have made in the wide house where we are so magnificently entertained. And there will be no disposition in either of us to boast himself against his fellow.


Before every soul that is earnestly seeking life everlasting, God has set an open door—a door, it may be, where no one ever saw a door before, and where he that comes immediately after will discover naught but solid spiritual masonry. But what matters it *how* we enter, if we are but safely in? We shall all meet in the royal banqueting hall, and partake of the rich provisions of grace,

“While all our hearts, and all our songs,  
Join to admire the feast,  
Each of us cries with thankful tongue,  
Lord, why am I a guest?”

The *entering upon* the everlasting life, while

not susceptible of a clear elucidation to one who is an utter stranger to all the experiences connected with it, is yet a fact easily recognized by those familiar with the phenomena attending it. But no one can from these phenomena alone, determine *when* or *how* it was entered upon; whether it had its beginning in early childhood and has had a gradual expansion, even as the sapling expands into the wide-spreading, and storm-defying monarch of the wood; or whether later in life, it began in a marvelous conversion which was like the bursting forth of the sun at midday from behind clouds.

In essaying a delineation of this life, we shall, as far as possible, confine ourselves to such phraseology as is warranted by the inspired Word, and as will afford a variety of expression entirely adequate to the purpose—a variety that greatly enlarges our conception of what this life must be in the multitude of its details, and at the same time, give us a very humiliating sense of the progress we have made therein, causing us to adopt the language of the apostle, and say: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Jesus Christ. I count not myself to





have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Moreover, in the delineation attempted, while recognizing the fact that the everlasting life always and necessarily admits of gradations in the experience of those who have entered upon it, yet it is not our province to establish the grade, determining which form of experience is the more advanced, or which, in the order of nature comes first, or which is the more desirable. It is presumable that there is no law regulating this matter, save that of fitness and opportunity, which binds only the sovereign dispenser of grace.

While "one star differs from another star in glory," it would hardly fall within our province to say, which first flashed its light athwart the blue ether, or which is the most serviceable in the realms above us.

The first feature of this life to which attention is asked is that of which the apostle Paul makes mention in the opening of the eighth chapter of Romans: "*There is therefore now no condemnation in them which are in Christ Jesus.*"

Evidently, this freedom from condemnation



is not because the desert of sin in them is not the same as in others; but because they have experienced an abundant pardon for past offenses, and are being kept through the power of God from falling, or if not kept continuously, then their recovery is so immediate and thorough that condemnation is the exception, and not the rule. They are not less conscious of their ill-desert but they hope in the mercy of God. It is nothing to the purpose to say, that the sense of condemnation has, in many instances, returned to those who have been for a considerable period freed from it—persons whose piety has been eminent. The absolute permanency of any experience is not essential to its genuineness. The fact that I am under a physician's care to-day, does not disprove the claim that until yesterday I had a clean bill of health.


But some one will ask, if this feature is not liable to counterfeit? May it not be, that, in certain cases, there *ought* to be a sense of condemnation where there is none, as in the case of David, before Nathan reproved him? Undoubtedly. Hence it is not safe to rest the case here.

In the same connection, Paul has responded to the agonizing inquiry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "*I thank God*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Hence, it is proper to enumerate as another distinctive feature of this life, deliverance from the body of death, or from the hamperings of sinful propensity, from those depraved tendencies of our nature, which constitute "the law in the members." It is conceivable, that a man may be without condemnation, and may continue so, even while struggling against the powerful proclivities toward evil remaining in him. And he may be measurably a wretched man, simply because this struggle is a matter of necessity, if he would escape condemnation; though not so wretched as when he is overcome and brought into captivity.

We apprehend that, in the experiences of this life, the law in the members must not override the law of the mind. If there is still need to watch and pray lest there be an entering into temptation, if the old man dies hard, and there is an occasional spasm, a writhing as if in pain, yet, evidently, the bitterness of death is past.

There is abundance of testimony gathered out of the experience of those who are in Christ Jesus, and who have long, but unsuccessfully, struggled against some depraved inclination which had become almost, if not quite a dis-



ease, that a time came when they realized a deliverance so complete, that all *hankering* after the forbidden object was taken away; that they came even to *loathe* the indulgence which had been so long their chief snare, a very body of death which clave to them as if it had been welded to their being as an inseparable adjunct, a burden carried everywhere, and under which they were ever and anon staggering and falling into the mire.

*Liberty*, in a large and intelligent sense of the word—*freedom from every form of spiritual bondage*—is another characteristic of this life, which may be more fully appreciated by those who enjoy it, than by others who are only sighing for it, having never attained to anything that is worthy of the name.

“Delivered from the *bondage* of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God,” is written over the very portal which gives entrance to the life everlasting.

This liberty is not *license*\*. Those, who

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\*By freedom I do not mean the right to do as you will, but liberty to do as you ought. By freedom I mean freedom from restraints that hinder obedience.

PRINCIPAL FAIRBAIRN,  
At a recent Congregational Council.

enjoy it, do not use it as "a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." They are at liberty to serve God, and are free *in* that service. They are quite at their ease in doing whatsoever He requires of them. They *run* in the way of His commandments with the suppleness of an athlete. They run without wearying, and walk without fainting. They have no *wish* to do any manner of evil. They are not in bondage to ignorance or error, though they may be both ignorant and in error, for they are free from all those commitments that shut out the light and embarrass the volitions. They are anxious to learn and are "following on to know the Lord." If they find they have been in error they count it no dishonor to acknowledge the fact, and take a new departure. They claim no infallibility for themselves, and expect to modify their views in conformity to increasing light. They are not anxious to be consistent for consistency's sake. They are thoroughly candid, teachable, and open to conviction.

They are not in bondage to any *injurious habit*, although they may be addicted to some such habit, not realizing at the time its injurious character.

In all things, and at all times they have



a sense of freedom, and are facile in doing what was once drudgery. It may not have been done as well as others would have done the same thing, but it has been done with a willing mind.

*Rest* is another distinctive feature of this life. "Come unto Me," said Christ, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart (and consequently could not require of you anything unreasonable in the way of service), and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Under every form of bondage, there is more or less of struggle. Exceedingly violent at times are the attempts made to cast off the yoke, and get free from the vexatious entanglements into which the soul has fallen. And there is also the unrest caused by fear and remorse—the unrest of those who have no sense of forgiveness and no hope of blessedness beyond the grave; as also the unrest of those who are "anxious and troubled about many things" pertaining to the present world. We do not mean to say, that nothing will evermore disturb or annoy him that has entered into the rest Christ proffers. He most likely will have frequent occasion to bid his soul return unto its rest. He may, ever and

anon, be found tossing on the sea of uncertainty whither he has been driven by the sudden blast of a tempest, but it will not be long before he has taken his bearings, and is returning to port—unto his rest, the rest of faith, it is called, where faith is stronger than fear, where faith dissipates doubt, where faith interprets the providences of God, which are seemingly adverse, as boding no ill to him.

Like the child of the sea-captain, who felt no fear while the ocean storm was raging, because his father was at the helm, so he both “hopes and quietly waits for the salvation of God.”

*Contentment*, another form of rest, is also a feature of the everlasting life. “I have learned,” says Paul, “in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to abound and how to be abased: everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

What was this content that entered so largely into the experience of the apostle? Was it stoicism, or fatalism? Did it imply an intention on his part to let things take their own course? Was he indisposed to interfere for the prevention of wrong? Was he never aggressive? If so

how did it happen that while waiting at Athens, "his spirit was stirred in him," when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry? How was it that he refrained not from disputations in the synagogue with the Jews and in the market with them that daily met with him? He evidently sought to change things wherever they might be changed for the better.

He urged himself and others on in the most radical reformatory movements, in face of the most bitter and alarming opposition. Nor yet did content in him imply a tame submission to personal outrage and injustice, when there was a legal or other honorable mode of escape therefrom. He did not hesitate, at certain junctures, to put himself upon the bill of rights as a Roman citizen. From the unjust rulings of a lower tribunal, he made his appeal unto Caesar. He would not become the victim of men who had bound themselves by an oath to assassinate him, while he could claim the protection due the most obnoxious criminal.

No more would he accept martyrdom at the hands of conspirators, when there was a way of escape through a basket let down from the wall of Damascus after nightfall. In his own religious experience, he was not satisfied



to rest in low attainments, when it was his privilege to go up higher. What, then, was this content of which he speaks, which attended him everywhere, and on all occasions?

It was that peculiar mental frame which knows no peevishness or moroseness; which accepts what comes in the ordering of divine providence, with a quiet, patient spirit; which is cheerful under a dispensation of want.

While in no sense an ascetic; while never doing the penance of going barefoot, while he might wear sandals; or going insufficiently clad, while he might send for the cloak he left at Troas; or going cold, while he might gather a bundle of sticks, and lay them on the fire; or going without any other comfort of life, while he might supply it by plying his trade of tent-making—yet, in any emergency where it was appointed unto him to suffer need, he never lost his cheerfulness, and never became despondent.

And this is the contentment that characterizes the life everlasting—a contentment that does not fold its hands in indifference; that does not rest satisfied with present attainments; a contentment that is wholly consistent with earnest and unwearied efforts to advance human weal and correct moral disorders; while it mur-

murs not at any present providential allotment, nor is impatient with any of the events that are plainly beyond its control; a contentment that accepts the lot which may not without dishonor be exchanged for a better—a lot of suffering, it may be, a lot of want succeeding fullness, where the contrast intensifies the trial. That this content may never be disturbed, we do not maintain; but contentment is the rule, and the period of discontent is brief. The fretfulness of an hour gives place to a surer and more abundant content than reigned before.

*Fullness of joy* is another feature of this life—a joy that is not the exuberance of natural feeling, or the flow of animal spirits, but “the joy of the Lord.” It is traceable directly to something He has said or done. It awakes on the slightest occasion—a strain of music, a passage out of the inspired volume, a whisper of secret devotion is all that is needed to thrill the soul with an unutterable gladness.

You can no more repress this joy than you can repress the waters that gush forth from the hillside and flow laughingly down into the valleys. It is the Lord that has thus “put gladness in the heart more than in the time that corn and wine are increased.”

*Walking with God*, is another sure characteristic of this life. The familiarity and intimacy of companionship, the vivid apprehension of a *presence* with us, constantly attending and sensibly affecting us, communicating to us His thoughts, calling forth the expression of our desires, is a real experience with those who have this life most abundantly.

From all that we are able to discover, two things, of a practical nature, suggest themselves as fair inferences: First, that it is not essential to any person's recognition as a partaker of this life, that all its features should have a marked development in his experience. As, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the worthies of the old dispensation receive their assignment among those whose names are inscribed on the roll of honor, for some one act in which their faith was brought out into bold relief—an act different from that which distinguished any one of his associates—so now, it should not seem at all strange if every man should have an experience altogether peculiar to himself, an experience, the very singularity of which, if it be Scriptural, bespeaks its genuineness.

Second, that we have by no means exhausted the theme. We might as soon think of exhaust-

ing the Word of God itself, for our theme has its ramifications throughout the entire volume, has them where you and I, perhaps, never suspected them. Nay, we might as soon think of exhausting the tomes of Christian experience, written and unwritten; for every part of that experience is but a pulse of the everlasting life. It may have beaten feebly, almost too feebly to gain a recognition by any human touch, but its throbbings registered themselves on the heart of the Infinite.

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## THE GROWING

1. The Mystic River
2. The Three Epochs
3. The Mustard Seed
4. The Leaven
5. Blade, Ear, Full Corn
6. Tribulation Working
7. Sanctification through Truth

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### THE GROWING

In all forms of life, standing still means decay and death.

In plant life, it is presumed there is something wrong—a worm at the root or a parasite on the leaf—when there is no advance toward perfection, no increase of girth, no spreading abroad and upreaching of the branches, no new growth in any direction.

In human life, the infant of days is expected to grow and to keep on growing. To stand still is to excite apprehension and alarm, lest there be derangement of some bodily function, or some insidious disease of a vital part.

So likewise, in the spiritual life, growth is expected and required of all who are found on the highway of holiness. Ample provision is made for such growth—provision for the righteous to hold on his way, and such as have clean hands to wax stronger and stronger; provision for leaving first principles and going on unto perfection; provision for being changed




into the image of Christ, from glory to glory.

Out of a large variety of Scripture statement on this subject, we select the phases that seem best adapted to our purpose, not forgetting that the subject has its general bearings, as embracing not only the individual believer who has the kingdom of God within him, but all upon whom the experiment of mercy will be tried, to the end of time.

1. The author of "The Land and The Book," whom a quarter-century of service as a missionary in Syria and Palestine had made familiar with the topography of the Holy Land, expresses the belief that Ezekiel in the first twelve verses of the forty-seventh chapter of his prophecies, is not predicting a mighty physical miracle. He finds instead a spiritual allegory which foreshadows miracles of mercy in store for a sinful world—"a delightful exhibition of the scheme of redemption from its inception to its final and glorious consummation. . . . The waters issuing out from under the house at the south of the altar, intimating, not darkly, that the stream of divine mercy has its source in sacrifice and death. Until justice is satisfied by the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God upon

the altar, the waters of life cannot flow forth from beneath."

That there was, while the temple stood, a small stream—a mere rill—answering to Ezekiel's description, cannot be questioned. Even at this day, there is such a flow of waters from underneath the Mosque of Omar, which covers the site formerly embraced in the temple area. These waters, it is supposed, had their origin in certain fountains and reservoirs in and about the city, which being connected by an aqueduct substantially built, originally furnished an abundant supply for all the demands of the temple service. An outlet for such of these waters as were waste, or as had been used in cleansing the vessels of the sanctuary and altar, was made on the south side of the altar, running eastward and flowing down, by a topographical necessity, the valley of Jehoshaphat, along the bed of the Kidron, into the desert, and thus into the Dead Sea. No doubt, as these waters came forth from under the house, they were originally discolored by the blood shed in typification of the sacrifice of Christ, and so may properly represent that stream of mercy, which flows forth to a lost world. The author aforesaid adds: "Though the waters first appeared issuing from one side



of the altar, yet we must not suppose the fountainhead was there, but further back, even under the Holy of Holies where dwelt the Shekinah of God's presence, intimating that the fountainhead of the river of life is in the heart of infinite love; but on its way out and down to ruined man, it must pass near the altar of divine justice."

But it is to the *increase* of the waters that our attention is specially directed: "And, when the man that had the line in his hand, went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the the *ankles*. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the *knees*. Again he measured a thousand and brought me through; the waters were to the *loins*. Afterward he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass over; for the waters were risen, waters to *swim in*, a river that could not be passed over."

Did the prophet have a view of the progressive stages of individual experience? Is not that experience at the beginning but a very little rill, which gathers volume and strength until it becomes a mighty river? The

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joy of the young convert is very sweet to him, and it may fill his soul to its utmost capacity; but compared to what he will experience if he shall follow him with the measuring line in his hand as he goes forth and measures a thousand and then another thousand, and still another thousand, he will find that the waters at the beginning were but to the ankles. He knew but little and enjoyed but little then compared with what he has since known and enjoyed. Forgetting the things which were behind—his earlier experiences—he has ever been pressing forward toward those things which are before, going from one attainment to another and a higher, and nearing the goal of a perfect man in Jesus Christ. And the waters of salvation, which were first only to the ankles, have risen to the knees, and from the knees to the loins, and from the loins have swelled to a river, which cannot be passed over—waters to swim in.


2. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will shew thee. . . . So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him." "And He brought him forth abroad, and said,

Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him so shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness."

"And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son, even Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. . . . And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order; and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." (Gen. 12: 1-4; 15: 5, 6; 22: 2, 9, 10.) Three epochs in the life of Abraham, and three stages of his religious experience are indicated by these words. They may be severally designated as the period of *separation*, of *waiting*, and of *sacrifice*.

The period of separation came first in his experience. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will shew thee," was the order peremptory which met Abraham at the very threshold of the inspired story of his life. What there might have been in the place of his nativ-

ity, and in association with his kindred, that required him to dissolve all connection with them is not a matter of record. It is quite probable, however, that there were, in that place and among his family connections, the outcroppings of an incipient idolatry. Possibly the controlling social influence in the immediate vicinage of his home was irreligious, and the chances were that Abraham would not escape contamination if he remained in those parts. It may be, that another reason for this requirement was found in the strength of attachment felt by Abraham for place and kindred, which ultimately would have become a rival interest to the claims of God, and so obstruct the fulfilment of His purpose concerning him. It was at least necessary, that Abraham's loyalty should be tested at the outset, and he be fully committed to a religious life. And what would do this so effectually as the order under consideration? If he obeyed that promptly and cheerfully it would be a testimony to all men of his consecration to the service of God. We do not claim that there were no other ends to be secured by the separation of Abraham from the place of his nativity and from the persons of his kindred. But, what we have



suggested is certainly in harmony with any plan God might have had for his spiritual advancement.

In this particular we believe that the experience of Abraham is typical of all true religious experience. The beginning of such an experience is always and necessarily accompanied by an order and act of separation. Every man who commits himself fully and intelligently to a religious life, recognizes his obligation to respect this order and perform this act. Not only the general tenor of New Testament doctrine, but the exact phrase, in many instances, requires just what was required of Abraham as the condition precedent of entering upon a religious life. "Whosoever he be of you," said Christ, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." "If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." On the other hand, He declares: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life."

The apostle in writing to the Corinthians,

asks: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Wherefore, he adds, "Come out from among them and be ye *separate*, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

However hard this condition may seem—and it will seem hard in proportion as we have our affections set upon the objects from which we are required to separate ourselves—it is nevertheless fulfilled by all who have been persuaded to enter upon a religious life. They have gone out voluntarily from amid influences and associations that are irreligious in their character: they are missed from places and scenes which were once their most frequent resort. In so doing they have been in harmony with God's plan, whether we regard Him as consulting simply the spiritual welfare of those who are entering upon a religious life, or, as designing them for some service whereby the race will be benefited and His kingdom advanced



in the earth. If the fact of separation is one foreign to the experience of any professing to be religious, the inference must be that they have mistaken their true character. They may have purposed to go into the land of Canaan, but they have come only unto Haran, and are dwelling there. The beginning of a true religious life is with them yet to be. But, if the first stage of religious experience has become a reality to any, and the fact of loyalty to God has been made manifest by an act of obedience such as has been described, then there follows the second stage, which is: The period of *waiting*. In Abraham's experience, this period was extended over a space of twenty-five years or more. Not many are required to wait so long. But all who go on unto perfection must pass through this ordeal sooner or later, and the duration of the trial in any given case, will depend upon the quality and quantity of piety already in exercise, and upon the ends God proposes to Himself. As men in business, with small capital, find it necessary to turn over that capital frequently in order to make it profitable, so where faith is weak, and there is but little of divine grace in the heart, the duration of any given trial must be proportionably short, or its

subject will lose patience under it. Hence, to him the promises of God must be "payable at sight," or "on demand." In his account with God, there are no long credits allowed. He discounts heavily all promises to pay which do not mature immediately.

It is entirely out of the question therefore, that his waiting experiences should be of long duration. He must be gradually wonted to such experiences. As he is able to bear them, so will they be lengthened, and he may yet become eminent in that very respect wherein he is now so deficient.

But God has certain ends to secure in passing a believer through this ordeal. Primarily, no doubt, His aim is to perfect the religious character. There are some defects, some weaknesses, that need to be discovered and remedied. He who waits may wonder and wonder why the blessing tarries so long after he is, in his judgment, prepared to receive it. But let him look to his ways narrowly, while the trial lasts. Does he do nothing through cowardice? Is he guilty of no weak compliance with the wishes of others? Does he make no unauthorized attempt to realize prematurely blessings *not yet due*? Has he altogether ceased from an experi-

menting that implies the restlessness of one not fully persuaded in his own mind, of a spirit ill at ease, which against hope cannot quite believe in hope? Will he not have fretted a good deal? Will he not at times have been quite desperate, even to the point of rebelliousness? How evident, then, his need of the trial to which his character has been subjected. But God may aim at something beyond the profit of the individual. He may wish to use him as an instrument in blessing others, and He is culturing him to that end. A generation is to be moulded by his example. The stamp of his character is to be left upon the whole family of believers to the end of time.

How meet, then, that such an instrument should be tempered with the highest skill, and polished to the last degree of susceptibility. But all those who wait are not appointed to fulfil a mission of such vast moment. It is in humbler stations and in more limited spheres of influence, that most of us fulfil our destiny. A small circle of friends—a few score or hundreds—are all who will ever receive any lasting benefit from our lives. And yet, who would be found wanting in his sphere, be it never so circumscribed and inconspicuous? He who is,

in his own estimation, but a pin in the vast and complicated machinery of God's universe, should be as ambitious for a perfect adaptation to, and usefulness in his place as the great balance wheel. And, no doubt, the experience he will get in waiting, will, in all its essential characteristics, be the same as that of the more honored instrument

The experience of those who wait is, if conformable to its patriarchal type, subject to the modifications suggested by newer and fuller revelations of God's will, revelations which will confirm the earlier.

Perhaps no part of a genuine religious experience so abounds in the comforting ministrations of the Holy Spirit as this. While we wait, the most precious things of God's Word—promises affluent in comfort, which perchance never before had arrested the attention, or had seemed to have any appositeness—are brought to remembrance. The timeliness of the ministration is often so marked as to produce the impression that there has been a special communication from heaven to the soul. During this period, also, there are experienced a variety of vexations. There is always an opportunity to tantalize, when the object of desire is

not attained immediately; when promises are unfulfilled, blessings postponed and hopes unrealized. If, in any case, a material obstruction seems to be the cause of delay; if some fact of physical science must be set aside as the condition of realizing the good promised, then what carping and scorning there is in the ranks of the faithless.

There has always been, and probably always will be, so long as there is a pure faith to be tried, a class of persons, respectable in numbers and talent, who will, on the slightest pretext, be ready to join in the discordant clamors of a skepticism, whose rallying cry through all the ages has been essentially the same: "Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto Him?" "Where is the promise of His coming: for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?"

There may be but little in all this to *unsettle* the faith of those who are steadfastly loyal to God; nevertheless, it is as tangible a fact in their experience, as it was in the experience of Abraham. And it may *annoy*, if it does not unsettle. But, amid the vexation and dis-

appointment incident to the period of waiting, there is no relaxation of purpose to continue in the service of God. Communion with Him is not only continued, but becomes more and more of a reality, a privilege, a comfort.

Perseverance in prayer, and in all forms of religious duty, with an increase of fervor as the interval of waiting waxes long and wearisome, answers to the Abrahamic type of what is to be accounted a prominent characteristic of all genuine religious experience during its second important stage.

The third, or *sacrificial* period, reached only where there is a fully developed experience, is a stage wherein God proves to the uttermost the loyalty of His servants, by requiring the object of supreme regard next to Himself. Few, comparatively, reach the sublime height where Abraham stood, when he stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the few are as good as many to prove the typical nature of Abraham's experience during that memorable period.

Isaac, the child of promise, for whose birth he had waited so long, was the full realization of the father's hopes. It was plain, that he was the object of the fondest, and, under the cir-

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cumstances, not an unreasonable affection. He was to Abraham more than all the world besides. For twenty-five years, more or less, there had been no apparent interruption to the steady flow of parental delight. Under the finest culture, Isaac's character was moulding into a beautiful symmetry. The impress of his father's greatness was upon him. He was a child of the covenant, and in him that covenant would be ratified. From sire to son, the legacy of blessing for all the nations of the earth was sure of a safe transmission. "Take now thy son, thine only son, even Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

And must it come to this? Can there be no ascent to the highest plain of religious experience except it be by the altar of sacrifice? Must the heart's dearest treasure be offered for a burnt offering upon some mountain summit, as a crowning testimony to heaven's King of its sure fealty to His throne? But it does come to this in the experience of many who are admitted to the innermost circle of privileged ones. An only son, reared with tendrest care, renewed in the temper of his mind, nurtured for the ser-

vice of God, sanctified and made meet for some ministry of blessing to a ruined race, is loved not idolatrously but ardently, and above all earthly objects. With or without the parental consent, the altar receives the lad. Wealth, as the instrument of a lofty and world-wide beneficence, is entrusted to one who has consecrated all to God. "Rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," the blessing of the liberal soul is his. Why should there be even a check to his prosperity? And yet, it comes—comes suddenly. He is impoverished to the last degree. The streams of his beneficence are dried up. The dearest privilege, the noblest ambition of his life is taken away. Or, a preparation for some calling in life, accompanied by a coveting of the best gifts a liberal culture may furnish, has been secured after years of struggle and hardship. He enters at length with joyfulness upon his life work. He rapidly gains experience therein. He goes to the front among his professional brethren. Thoroughly furnished, he is ready to do good service in his chosen calling for God, and for humanity, when, lo! from an unseen hand a sudden blow paralyzes his mental powers. The preparation sought, God gave him; and



then, recalling the gift, bound it for a burnt offering. His poor brain lies helpless upon the altar.

Or, a position among his fellow men comes within range of eager vision. It offers high vantage ground for one seeking opportunities to shape the character and destiny of men and of nations. The position is at length offered him. But he finds it a place of eminent exposure. All the artillery of human spite and envy are trained upon him.

And this comes, not through any want of fitness for a high position, but from a divine purpose to prove his loyalty to the utmost; even as that of Abraham was proven, when he was building the altar upon the mountain which God had shewed him, and was laying the wood in order, and was binding Isaac and making him ready for the sacrifice.

The severe aspect lent to each of these three stages of religious experience, implies no want of sympathy on the part of God for those who are passing through the trying ordeal. The thought of exile from father-land, of lifelong separation from kindred is painful, and a requirement that admits of nothing less is one that has in it some hard features.

So, the thought of waiting long years for the realization of a promise—waiting possibly with hands tied—waiting in suspense—waiting with nothing to do—while the urgency of one's own spirit is like fire shut up in the bones, this seems hard. It is hard. So, the thought of laying upon the altar the most precious thing God has committed to our trust savors of severity. And when the thought crystallizes into an experience of all that is involved in the test applied, there is a crying out of very pain. And yet, it is a pain that is to give birth to a surprising joy. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

After the pangs of separation, of waiting, of sacrifice, are over, a broad belt of silver lining will illumine the uplifting cloud. And now how natural to ask, Unto what stage of religious experience have we been advanced? Are we still in Haran? Or, have we reached Bethel? Perchance, we have gone down to Egypt, and, returning, are at the place where our tent was


at the beginning; or, we are dwelling in the plain of Mamre; or, we are sojourning in Gerar; or, may be. we are *en route* to Jehovah-jireh.

But leaving the older economy behind us, let us emerge into the clearer light of the Gospel dispensation, and listen for a space, to what Christ has said on the subject of growth. He speaks in parables, and strives to make plain not only the *fact* of growth, but the *manner* of the fact.

3. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, . . . which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is *grown*, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Professor Hackett. in his incidents of travel in Palestine, records the following: "As I was riding across the plain of Akkar on the way to Carmel, I perceived at some distance from the path, what seemed to be a little forest or nursery of trees. I turned aside to examine them. They proved to be an extensive field of the mustard plant. It was then in blossom, full grown, in some cases six, seven, and nine feet high, with a stem


or trunk an inch or more in thickness, throwing out branches on every side. I was now satisfied in part. I felt that such a plant might well be called a tree, and in comparison with the seed producing it, a great tree. But still the branches or stems of the branches, were not very large, or apparently very strong. Can the birds, I said to myself, rest upon them? Are they not too slight and flexible? Will they not bend or break beneath the superadded weight? At that very instant as I stood and revolved the thought, lo! one of the fowls of heaven stopped in its flight through the air, alighted on one of the branches, which hardly moved beneath the shock, and there before my eyes, began to warble forth a strain of the richest music, charming away all my doubts."

Christ, doubtless, selected this plant for His purpose, "not with reference to its ultimate greatness, but to the *proportion* between the smallness of the seed and the herb which unfolds itself from thence." As the mustard plant attains its ample dimensions from the most insignificant seed, so from the weakest and most despised beginnings, the kingdom of heaven will develop itself more, and more, and more, until its branches shall reach out even to the



boundaries of the world, and its glory shall overshadow and embrace the whole human family.

The kingdom of heaven resembles the mustard plant in having a *very small beginning*. This is true always and everywhere in the experience of the individual. In the most striking cases of conversion, where translation from the kingdom of darkness into that of light has been attended with the most rapturous joys, the actual amount of piety has, at the first, been vastly smaller than the subject of the change imagines. In religious experience he is but a babe. He does not realize this at once. He may feel very strong, and quite able to cope with his spiritual antagonists. Nay, he may be disposed to throw down the gauntlet, and challenge to the conflict. But, like the too confident Peter, he will soon learn how greatly he has overrated his strength. He can endure no more than an infant in struggling against foes that he counted as good as vanquished. He may think himself very wise also, and entirely competent to instruct others. But he will soon discover how much there is to learn, and how properly he may sit at the feet of the humblest follower of Jesus. He may think he has very




strong faith. But, on his first attempt to remove the mountain and plant it in the midst of the sea, he finds that the compelling power of his faith is unusually small. Great disappointments are wont to attend those who, in their first experience, make no account of the fact, that the beginning of the kingdom of heaven within them, is as the least of all seeds cast into the earth.

But such disappointments do not disprove the genuineness of the change wrought in them. They only go to show that the kingdom of heaven in their experiences, is, as yet, as a grain of mustard seed. The same kingdom may be as surely begun and its foundations as firmly laid in another heart where converting grace has wrought almost without human observation.

More frequently than many imagine, these foundations are laid in the heart of the little child, or the diffident youth, years before he knows the voice that calleth him.

Nay, they are sometimes laid in the heart of the man of adult years, who, while not at all ashamed of Christ, has such exalted views of what pure and undefiled religion should be in those who profess it, that he shrinks from any public expression of his own feelings, lest he



should, as others, be left to bring reproach upon the cause which is so sacred, and which seems to him to be already so deeply wounded in the house of its professed friends. Emphatically, with some, "the kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." A change has been wrought in the character—gently wrought by the Spirit of God—wrought perhaps, without the interposition of any human instrument, which is not recognized at the time as regeneration, and yet is nothing less. Possibly, one watchful eye takes in the thrilling incident, and lays it away among treasured mementos. A mother discovers the germ of the new life in her child. Fain would she hide in her own bosom the discovery, lest it should not prove to be the forerunner of other hopeful symptoms, or, lest others should think what she had seen was revealed only to a mother's partiality, and would not stand the test of all the approved theories of regeneration. And, besides, she herself was not expecting so soon to see the fruit of Christian culture, and the fulfilment of the covenant made with believing parents in behalf of their children. Nevertheless, the kingdom of heaven may be there all the same as if it had had a more marvelous beginning.

While there may be reason for suspecting that where, for a protracted period, there has been no growth, there never was a beginning of the kingdom, yet the expectations of certain ones that the maturity of Christian character will be attained immediately, or very early, are often unreasonable.

“But when it—the mustard plant—is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” So also is the kingdom of God. When once the seed of the kingdom has found a lodgment in the good ground of any human heart, however feeble the earliest development, it will be sure to unfold itself more and more.

If the founder of a kingdom could not at the beginning show the feeblest rally on the part of His adherents in an attempt to rescue Him from an ignominious fate—nay, would have discouraged any such attempt, if made—has, nevertheless, gone on conquering and to conquer, how certain it must be, that those who have espoused His cause, are called by His name, and have the kingdom of God *within* them, will keep on growing until they reach the maturity of character for which ample provision has



been made in the economy of redemption.

4. "Another parable spake He unto them: "The kingdom of heaven is *like unto leaven*, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."

The observations of Trench, a good authority on the parables of our Lord, are worthy of attention, as preparing the way for the exposition that is to follow: "If, on the one side, the effects of leaven on meal present an analogy to something evil in the spiritual world, they do also on the other to something good, as it is universally agreed that its effects on bread are to render it more tasteful, lighter and more nourishing. There is no need then to take the parable in other than its obvious sense, that it is concerning the diffusion and not the corruption of the Gospel.

"Till the whole is leavened," can be nothing less than a prophecy of a final complete triumph of Christianity; that it will diffuse itself through all nations, and purify and ennoble all life. Ignatius shows how leaven may be used freely, now in a good, and now in a bad sense: "Lay aside the evil which has grown old and maketh sour, and be transmuted into the new leaven which is in Christ Jesus."

The important things in the parable, to which we may presume Christ would have us turn our attention, relate to the *leaven* itself, and to the *manner* and *extent* of its influence in changing the character of the meal—the leaven standing for the kingdom of heaven and the meal for humanity. What the leaven is and what it does in the meal, the kingdom of heaven is and does in the world of mankind.

(1) The leaven itself is a something *outside* the meal. It is an imported element, introduced for the express purpose of changing the character of the meal and fitting it for uses to which it could not have been adapted, if left to itself.

The kingdom of heaven is in this respect like the leaven. "My kingdom," said Christ, "is not of this world." It is an imported power—imported from the heavenly world—for the purpose of changing the character of man from what it is by nature, and from what it would continue to be, except for the introduction of a divine principle—the leaven of righteousness personified. There is nothing in human nature, if left to itself, that would become the germ of a moral renovation, nothing that would fit it for the kingdom of heaven. Left to itself, human nature goes from bad to worse. Its career in

this world is fast fitting it for destruction. It will perish through its own inherent corruption. Unless some one, "mighty to save," interposes for its rescue, and changes the bent of its depraved inclinations, putting hard-a-port the helm of its determined will-power, it is "in danger of eternal sin." There surely is no mistaking the situation, something must come down from heaven, or the lump of humanity will remain forever unleavened of the leaven of righteousness.


(2) Leaven is a *vivifying power*. It quickens inert matter into a peculiar form of life. This life is wrapped somewhat in mystery, and yet the meal recognizes its presence and confesses its power by moving itself aright under its influence. It awakens to intense activity, it expands, it becomes a breathing mass, it throbs with vigorous pulsations.

What leaven does in this respect for the meal, the kingdom of heaven does for humanity. Finding it "dead in trespasses and sins," with no holy aspirations, it breathes into it the breath of life.

The New Testament Scriptures, besides representing Christ as a quickening spirit, as the abolisher of death, and as the resurrection and

life, describe the change wrought in these words: "But God, . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." "And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him." The inference is, that a life-giving and life-extending power resides in the kingdom of heaven from its inception to its final triumphant establishment in the earth; an inference that has its echo as far back in the centuries as when Solomon wrote: "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened."

Out of a thousand incidents that might be adduced in illustration of the vivifying power of the kingdom of heaven while as yet the lump is but partially leavened through its influence, take one showing its life-extending power. The pastor for fifteen years of a purely agricultural parish, in Vermont, gives from the record of his labors in that parish during those years, the following statistics of burials: Whole number of burials, two hundred thirty-six. Of these, two hundred two were twenty years old and upward. The average age of one hundred twelve who were not Christians, was forty-



nine years and a fraction. The average age of the remaining ninety, who were Christians, was sixty-two years and a fraction, a difference of thirteen years in favor of the latter. Of the one hundred thirty-four who died under twenty, the average age of the children of Christian parents was seven and twenty-six hundredths years, while the average of children of parents who were not Christians, was only three and twenty-six hundredths, or four years in favor of the former.

(3) Leaven is an *assimilating* power. It changes the particles of the meal into which it is put, transmuting them into its own nature.


The assimilating process may be accelerated or retarded by certain conditions, but it does not, under *any* circumstances, instantly work the desired transformation. *Time* is required for the thorough leavening of the mixture; but, sooner or later, the whole mass will be so impregnated with the vitalizing element, that, were it possible to separate from it the original deposit, the assimilating process would go on all the same, every particle of the meal having itself so far imbibed the leavening principle as to become a leavening power.

And this would be predicable of leaven, how-



ever small the amount of the original deposit; its power must be felt sooner or later throughout the whole mass with which it is brought in contact, "a little leaven, leavening the whole lump." So is the kingdom of heaven in the mass of humanity, it is an assimilating power there. It acts directly upon character, and indirectly upon every part of man's complex organism, changing his vile body and fashioning it like unto Christ's glorious body. (Phil. 3: 21.)

In a variety of Scripture phrase, the assimilating process is indicated: As a putting off of the old man with his lusts, and a putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; as a new birth in which old things pass away, and all things become new; as a hope, purifying even as Christ is pure; as beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and being changed into the same image from glory to glory; as being made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; as made *meet* for the inheritance of the saints in light; as bearing the image of the heavenly; as being like Christ, when seeing Him as He is; as being called, chosen, sanctified, glorified.



Time must evidently be allowed for this assimilating process; but the assimilation must take place. It is a part of the *régime* of the kingdom of heaven that the nature of man shall undergo this change. Moreover, every citizen of the kingdom, just in proportion to the thoroughness with which he is permeated by its leavening influence, will have power in himself to extend and perpetuate the assimilating process.

Long since the bodily presence of Christ in the mass of humanity ceased to be a necessity, but at His ascension the leaven of the kingdom had so far impregnated the company of believers, that He felt justified in saying to them, "Greater works shall ye do, because I go unto My Father."

Through their influence, the assimilating process was to go forward with ever accumulating force. From man to man, from neighborhood to neighborhood, from nation to nation, the leaven of the kingdom was to extend, until the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, should become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

The *activity* of the leavening principle is dependent upon the following conditions:

- (1) It must be *freshly prepared*, if its ef-

fects upon the meal are to be in the highest degree prompt and energetic. It loses its power with increasing age. No prudent bread-maker would be willing to take the risks of using leaven a year old. The kingdom of heaven is in this respect like the leaven. The miraculous supply of food which God provided for His people in the wilderness, and which may be regarded as a type of whatever coming down from heaven is designed to nourish the spiritual forces of His kingdom, was provided day by day. If kept over, even to the second day, it bred worms. Even so, provision is made in the kingdom of heaven for fresh supplies of grace, for spiritual manna day by day. Old experiences grow stale, and those who hear them told o'er and o'er, cease to be profited by them, while those who tell them because they have no new experiences, lose their power, and cease to be to any great extent, a leavening influence in society. He who has new experiences is invariably the active and aggressive agent in extending the kingdom of heaven among men. It is the young convert, or the newly-baptized disciple, that gains readiest access to the heart and most powerfully convinces the understanding.

Pentecostal effusions of the Holy Spirit upon



individuals, upon churches, upon whole communities, however marvelous, seem to become exhausted and need to be renewed from time to time, in order that the forces of the kingdom may not become relaxed. It is not *a time*, but *times of refreshing* from the presence of the Lord, that keep the vigor of the kingdom toned up to the point of the highest energy and aggressiveness.


(2) The leaven must be *hid* in the meal; being so thoroughly stirred or moulded into the mass, that if possible, it may be brought into close contact with every particle. But for this hiding, the power of the leaven would not be felt in the manner desired. Even so, the kingdom of heaven must be brought into close contact with human nature, as a condition of greatest activity in changing its character from what it is, to what God would have it.

In what might be regarded as the first introduction of the kingdom into the lump of humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, who embodied in Himself all the forces of that kingdom, there was a complete exhibition of what was appropriate in this contact. Gathering about Himself a company of men, who constituted a fair average of humanity, He took



them into closest intimacy with Himself and constituted them the nucleus of the kingdom that is to fill the whole earth. Through His example, the disciples have learned how essential it is that they should come near to men, and by familiar and friendly intercourse, bring them into close contact with the spirit and principles of the kingdom, as exemplified in their lives and testified to by their lips—so working into the structure of human society, and into the web of human thought and affection, the leaven of righteousness.

The bringing together of Christian and heathen nations by immigration and emigration, is spreading abroad the leaven of the kingdom after God's own plan. He is mixing it rapidly into the lump of humanity by processes not always the most agreeable to us, but effectual. It was not enough, that we should send our missionaries to stir the leaven into the populous masses of China and Japan, as we had previously done into the masses of India and Turkey; the process was too slow, considering how near was "the time of the end." God must hasten the glorious consummation, by bringing the elements that leaven and the elements that are to be leavened more rapidly together. Hence, to our



shores has come an emigration from China and Japan, to say nothing of other lands. It has come, unwittingly, perhaps, yet surely, for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

(3) The meal with the leaven put into it, should be kept in a *warm place*, in order that the best results may be secured at the earliest moment practicable. However completely the leaven may be hid in the meal, if the mixture is thrust away in the cold, and the lump becomes chilled, the leavening process will be suspended. To a greater or less extent this is true of all forms of life—vegetable, animal, spiritual. It must have *warmth* as the condition of the greatest activity.


When the leaven of the kingdom of heaven is put into a human soul, it is vital to the spread of that leaven and to its transformative influence over his character, that he should be kept in a warm place where he will be brought into contact with loving, sympathetic hearts. If, on the contrary, just as he comes under the influence of the leaven, his lot is cast in a cold church, whose membership feel none of the enkindlings of a glowing affection, and who surround him with an atmosphere of wintry reserve, the activity of the leavening principle



of the kingdom is likely to be suddenly suspended. Every church owes it to her own membership, as well as to all who are without, to make her religious home, her communion, her place of prayer, a warm place in which the leaven of the kingdom will work vigorously. If, in any instance, either in the character of the individual, or of the masses, the transformatory process is not going on satisfactorily, the reason is apparent. Either the leaven of the kingdom is not in the lump—something having clearly been mistaken for it—or, if the leaven has at some time, in the long ago maybe, been put into the lump, the conditions of its activity there are not fulfilled, the leaven not having been so thoroughly worked in as to bring it in close contact with the materials to be leavened; or, else, a proper degree of warmth has not been maintained.

The love of the church for her converts has oftentimes grown so cold, that her bosom has no more of warmth in it, than has that of the dead mother who has gathered in her last embrace her new-born babe.


5. Christ, in frequent discourse on the kingdom of God, seemed desirous that his hearers should be informed as to every peculiarity of



that kingdom; and He never lost an opportunity to present the feature that is now under consideration—the *growth* of that kingdom in the individual, and in the world at large. And never did a fairer opportunity present itself than in the parable of the sower, where occur the words: “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” The law of growth, which is the same in the spiritual kingdom as in the natural, could not be more clearly set forth than in these words and their immediate connection. Succinctly, is the analogy of growth stated: “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.” And it is to be borne in mind, that the analogy of growth holds equally good where the kingdom of God is set up within the narrow limits of individual experience, as where it has the whole earth for its domain.


“And first with nicest skill and art,  
Perfect and finished in every part,  
A little model the Master wrought,  
Which should be to the larger plan  
What the child is to the man,  
Its counterpart in miniature.”

Somewhat of mystery, in the operation of



this law, Christ leaves unsolved. He does not attempt to explain *how* the seed springs and grows up. The fact of growth, with the agencies employed in promoting it; the divine economy by which the heat and the cold, the rain and the sunshine combine to produce those transformations by which we note the progress made from seeding to earing, and from earing to harvest, are the things we are chiefly concerned to understand. These also are the things which Christ essayed to explain in their spiritual significance, and the things to the investigation of which we are constantly challenged. Passing then immediately to the law of spiritual growth in the kingdom of God we have:

*First*, the *blade* period, covering in the natural world, the largest portion of the life of every cereal. The process of germination, following, under ordinary conditions, very soon after the casting in of the seed, gives birth to the blade, whose springing is so *silent*, that no ear ever yet detected the faintest traces of that exquisite harmony, produced by the simultaneous movement of countless myriads of germs struggling forth to the light of the natural world. The beginning is as *insignificant* as it is noise-



less. The human eye, with closest observation, can scarcely discern the tinge of greenness as it gathers in dim outline over the surface of the well-tilled field. *Tender*, as it is insignificant, the blade seems but the frailest of all frail things at the first. And yet, *in* the blade from the very outset is the living principle which is the only sure harbinger of earth's increase. In it is the promise of mighty harvests that shall whiten all the plain. But the blade, however frail, seemingly, its existence, is destined ere long to clothe the field with verdure, gladdening the heart of man with waving beauty and rustling melody. It shall round out into the symmetrical proportions of a thrifty stalk with its exquisite mechanism of finely wrought tissue, vein, and artery, through which flow the rich juices which night and day, in sunshine and shower, carry nourishment to the forming ear and substance to the ripening grain. The blade period may seem disproportionally long to those who consider not how much is achieved during that period, and how much more depends upon a well-developed and healthful growth of the stalk. But the skilled husbandman manifests no impatience for the earing. He understands the causes of delay to be indig-


enous to the very constitution of the plant, and in accordance with the law of its growth. He comprehends how much, how, indeed, all depends upon the influences that surround the plant during this period, how sunshine *and* shower—not all sunshine nor all shower—must be wisely combined to produce that condition of the blade which shall prepare it to sustain the most abundant harvest.

So is the kingdom of God; the blade, in that kingdom, is first. After the seed, which is the Word of God, has germinated in the heart of man, and he begins to live a regenerated life, the first symptoms of the spiritual transformation are often not at all marvelous. They come not with observation, with “lo! here’s,” and “lo! there’s,” but in secret silence of the mind. The dawning of hope is as the springing of the blade, the faintest flutter of a new sensation, the scarcely perceptible transition from darkness to dawn. It is, perhaps, seriously questioned, especially by those who have listened to marvelous experiences told by others, whether there has been a saving change wrought in them. It is feared that the signs of the new life are illusory. Nevertheless, day and night there are steps of progress taken, and



a sure unfolding of the life of God in the soul. The growth seems slow indeed, and the period long before he will arrive at any maturity of spiritual developement. He may, for a long time, be at an apparent standstill, the subject of a drouth whose general prevalence affects him disastrously. And yet, the blade period is ever the more protracted one in religious experience, as it is in the life of the plant; and what a man becomes during that period—what of robustness of spiritual life he attains amid influences favorable or unfavorable to spiritual growth, will determine what he will be during the periods of earing and full corn, when character crystallizes, and the fruits of a life of piety toward God, and benevolence toward man, are matured for the harvest and the ingathering.


*Second*, the *earing* period succeeds the blade; but is far briefer in its continuance. The months of preparation are now supplemented by a constructive act of marvelous skill. The little cells which are to receive, and shelter, and fashion the subtle fluid which is to become the substance of the harvest, are rapidly constructed, and crown the blade like a nodding plume. No sooner formed than filled, the ear is



rounded out into perfect symmetry, and retains its shapely condition until its mission is accomplished. And there can be no more kernels in the ear than is justified by the antecedent preparation. The mould in which the wheat is cast is the exact measure of the capacity of the stalk on which it grows, which can never be increased after the earing has begun.

"So is the kingdom of God." The blade is succeeded by the ear, in the experience of all who enter that kingdom. A time will come, sooner or later, in the experience of every true Christian, when there will be, in a *normal* growth—such a growth as Christ has made provision for, save in cases where an early death interrupts such growth—what we may call a casting of character in some peculiar mould.

All that has been developed in him previously has been but preparatory to what shall presently appear. His piety is to take on its *permanent* type. The amount of fruit that will come to maturity can now be determined almost to a certainty. There is no likelihood that he will change materially from this time forth to the close of life. His habits are formed. His views are settled. It is his earing time, when all the influences, which have been operating



hitherto, will conspire to reveal character in its fixedness.

*Third, "After that the full corn in the ear."* The ripening process is going on throughout this period with more or less rapidity. The grain passes out of its milky condition into its perfected shape, the hardened kernel, where it awaits the harvest.


"So is the kingdom of God." After the earing time comes the full corn experiences of the believer, in which is found the ripened fruit of religious culture—the full assurance of hope, a faith that staggers not at the promise of God, a patient endurance of suffering, a glorying in tribulation also, a tireless activity in the service of God, a courage undaunted by obstacles, a joyful waiting for the bright appearing of the Lord.

The ripening of religious character is sometimes exceedingly rapid. The terrible heat of some sudden affliction, an extraordinary manifestation of the divine compassion, or an enrapturing vision of the exceeding majesty and glory of the divine Person, has brought to early maturity the fruit of Christian culture.

Abraham's experience, antecedent to the offering up of Isaac, though steadily progressive,

had not passed beyond the earing; but the trial to which he was subjected in that memorable transaction brought to a speedy and symmetrical fullness the experience of his eventful life, and drew forth a testimony to his faithfulness that like a glorious sunset illumined the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage. A magnificent old man, he is gathered at length, like a shock of wheat fully ripe, into the heavenly garner. Having once passed out of the blade state, and out of the earing into the full corn, there is no lapsing again into a condition of unfruitfulness. A fair and steady light, shining more and more, penetrating farther and farther into the surrounding darkness, is his example of holy living. Oftentimes, no doubt, the rapid ripening process is accounted for by the fact that the harvest season is at hand. Death is near, and there is a gracious multiplication of those spiritual influences, which are the sunshine and shower of God's pity, in order that there may be no immaturity of character at the ingathering. There must be some samples of ripened fruit in the heavenly garner.

Yet, as the grain when fully ripe, may for a little season, for one reason or another, remain ungathered, so the ripe Christian may continue




on the earth after his character has matured and he has obtained the assurance of an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Though to depart and be with Christ might be the better thing for *him*, yet his presence in the world, after his generation has all passed away, may be needful for the fullfilment of some one of God's grand purposes.

The patriarch leaning upon his staff, or lifting his withered hands in blessing, is supplying, perchance, as important a link in the unfolding of a gracious economy, as is the prophet, who, in full vigor, drops his mantle upon the earth, mounts a chariot of fire, and ascends to heaven in a whirlwind. The slow decay of the mental faculties, the gradual taking down of the clay tabernacle, the gathering up of the feet in natural death without one spasm of pain, the going out of life as the snuff of a candle, may be as fitting a *finale* to a useful career, as was that mysterious taking-off of Israel's law-giver while his eye was not yet dimmed, nor his natural force abated. The full corn may be gathered when and how the husbandman listeth. It shall be the crowning glory of a spiritual culture, a golden sheaf in the heavenly garner.

In the light of this parable of our Lord, how

manifest is it, that we are not justified in despairing of any man, simply because he is *long in the blade*.

The husbandman who should become disgusted with his wheat crop, parched and withered by the early summer's drouth, and, declaring it would come to nothing, should turn in his stock to feed, while there remained days and possibly weeks before the earing and the harvest, would be guilty of no greater folly than possesses him who says: There is no hope of spiritual improvement in a man whose character has not yet taken on the fixedness which stamps his future with a changeless destiny—and we dare not single out the man of whom this may be said. There may, indeed, be rational ground for fearing lest the early promise remain unfulfilled. But if there be the sunshine and the showers of God's grace, there may yet be a spiritual reviving. And though the harvest may be scant as to *quantity*, the *quality* may be of the highest excellence. We have plucked the ears of wheat in a bountiful harvest, counting out an average of over forty berries to an ear. But they were no fairer, and yielded no finer grade of flour in the grist than when, in the preceding year, the average yield was only half so large.




And why not so likewise, in the kingdom of God? The rain—"the latter rain"—may soak down through all the dryness and the hardness to the very roots of spiritual being and give fresh promise to the patient husbandry.

It is manifestly unreasonable to expect any experience *out of time*—the ear in the blade period, or full corn in time of earing. Oftentimes young Christians are greatly disheartened because their religious character is so immature, and their experience of divine things so circumscribed. Indeed, they often seem to themselves to be making no progress at all. But something must be allowed them in view of the recentness of the change that has passed upon them. They are fairly reckoned as in the blade period of their development. The earing time with them is not yet. It were unreasonable to expect them to come thus early unto "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." They have not had time to "*grow up* into Him, in all things, which is the head." Besides, some of these have had but little spiritual culture, and are struggling against doubts and difficulties engendered of ignorance, and against habits grown imperious through long indulgence, and against propensities which have rutted them-

selves deeply into the soil of their hearts. If such as they should remain long in the blade, we shall not despair of their fruitfulness. By and by, we shall look for the full corn in the ear. And this should be said unhesitatingly, notwithstanding some may convert the saying into a guilty subterfuge.

But what inference is so painful as that which must needs be drawn, respecting the persons constituting a large class in almost every Christian church, of whom it might be said in the words of the apostle: "that when, for the time," that has elapsed since their conversion and since they have enjoyed a generous Christian culture, "they ought to have been teachers, have need that one teach them again, what are the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat,"—whose reproach it is, that they are still in the blade—men and women, who, perhaps since early childhood, have been numbered with God's spiritual Israel, but have never as yet had any full corn experiences. It is sad to think how often the disparity between the promise of the blade and the full corn is so great as to render the ingathering at the last of little significance. As they sink into the embrace of death,






their exit from life and from the circles of Christian influence is hardly felt to be a calamity. The Church scarcely knows whether it has gained or lost by their demise. The event is like the tiniest pebble dropped into the on-rushing stream of human affairs, it hardly causes a ripple upon the surface. No one stands over their dying couch as Joash stood over that of the dying prophet, exclaiming: "My father! my father! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" A thin and blasted ear at the best, with only a few shrivelled kernels, is likely to be all their contribution to the harvest. Alas for them, when the harvest home is shouted and the sheaves are gathered in! Alas! for the Heavenly Husbandman when He sends forth His angel-reapers to gather them! Gather them He doubtless will; but how small a return for all the extraordinary care He has bestowed upon them!

6. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; *knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.*" The climax in which the mind is carried

forward from one plane of thought to a higher, was one in great favor with the apostle Paul. In the words just quoted, from Rom. 5:3-5, are found an important member of a climax, and a climax itself. Beginning with the declaration that those who are justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, he advances in thought to a conception of the state wherein there is rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and concludes with a still higher attainment, in which there is a glorying in tribulation also. So contrary is it to the natural habit of the human mind, which oftenest finds in tribulation an occasion for the profoundest depression, that we are almost startled by the last member of the climax. And yet, a true Christian philosophy will, no doubt, be found in accord with the views of the apostle, and will see in tribulation, or rather in its outcome, a sufficient occasion for glorying, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. We understand the apostle to speak of the effects of tribulation upon believers—upon himself and his Christian brethren. “And not only so, but *we*,” who being justified by faith, have peace with God—“*we*,” who have been admitted to that state of



grace wherein there is rejoicing in hope of the glory of God—we are they, who glory in tribulation also. Then follows a clear statement of the reasons for such glorying, which rise, one above the other, as their importance requires.

This phase of growth, thus introduced, divides itself into two parts, *viz.*, *the working*, and *the order of the working*, in which the importance of the succession becomes apparent.


The working is begun by *tribulation*. And we must not suppose that the tribulation of which the apostle speaks is made up chiefly of the ordinary trials of life, the ills of various sorts which are the common heritage of the race. Doubtless, so far as these trials put to the test our faith as professed believers in the wisdom, goodness and grace of God, they are to be counted in as a part of the tribulation.

But, while not excluding the common afflictions of life, the apostle would, doubtless, give special prominence to those forms of trial which are the peculiar heritage of believers—the afflictions to which they are subjected in consequence of an identification of their interests with those of God's kingdom in the earth. The trials to which their faith has been subjected, such trials as Abraham knew, as Elijah

and all the prophets knew, such trials as the primitive disciples knew, are what the apostle had chiefly in view, as *the* tribulation in which he and his brethren found occasion for glorying.

(a) The first result of this working is *patience*. Tribulation is supposed to cause suffering. It thrusts its victims into a furnace, and as the flames kindle and glow around them, waxing hotter and hotter, they writhe in agony.

But do they keep their temper, which is naturally inflammable? Do they smother the fires of resentment that feed on injustice as on dry tinder? Are they loyal still to their convictions? Do they persevere in the discharge of duty? Do they justify the divine administration, refusing to entertain one dishonoring thought of God, even though their pilgrimage on the earth is checkered by losses and disappointments? Do they await unrepiningly for the fullness of time to come when His promises are to be redeemed? Instead of running away like very cravens from the trials which are upon them, do they stand fast, bearing the suffering with an unflinching courage, and refusing to compromise their principles or swerve from their allegiance to



which they may indeed ascend to higher elevations, and into a purer atmosphere, but below which they will never fall by a spiritual decline. And, better still, this experience has a stimulating effect, inciting them to reach forth toward the things which are before, and press onward for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Thus it comes to pass, that one experience is evermore the earnest of another and a higher, while every step of progress heralds a new advance, by a rugged path it may be, along God's highway.

(c) Patience, having fulfilled her mission, stands waiting, while *experience*—"that which is proved worthy of approbation," "a state of mind which has stood the test," "character tried and proved,"—a skilled workman takes charge of the spiritual husbandry with design to form in the soul *the hope of glory*.

There was, it is true, a hope of some sort before. It was the hope of a young convert, warm and glowing. And a very comforting hope it was. He who had it, set great store by it, as well he might. He would not for the world part with it; and why should he? It seemed to him to be well grounded, having Jesus Christ at the foundation; and so we may believe it was. But, it


was no such hope—it had nothing like the value of a hope that is begotten of experience, the grand-child of tribulation, the child of patience. This hope is like an anchor that has been proven in the tempest. It has sustained the soul when the floods were lifted up. It endured when other hopes, brighter hopes it may be, were perishing.

Experience—not one form of experience, but the general experience, or the combined experiences of a soul in which tribulation has wrought patience—has found a basis of hope in the character, the Word, the works of God, such as the young convert has no conception of. It might not be charitable to say, that, while the latter may have gotten a hope and a good hope of salvation through Christ, the former has *experienced* a hope.

(d) *Hope* now comes in to complete what tribulation began, “And hope maketh not ashamed.”

Strictly, it does not shame by causing to be deceived. It is not a hope that disappoints the one who cherishes it.

With this hope, comes the fullness of the divine love: even as it came to Abraham, after he had laid Isaac upon the altar. Nobly had this man endured the fiery test to which God had



subjected him; and, henceforth, there could be nothing to obstruct the flow of love into his soul.

Consider now *the order* of the working in which the importance of the succession is made manifest. Tribulation—patience—experience—hope. This is the order; not fortuitous, but established as an irreversible law of God's kingdom, a law as absolute as the law of cause and effect.


Patience can no more precede tribulation, or experience patience, or hope experience, than can the harvest precede the sowing, or the sowing the tillage of the husbandman. Tribulation first, then patience, then experience, then hope. Admitting this to be the established law of sequence—regulating the growth of the divine life in the soul and the development of Christian character—and certain inferences must follow:

(1) That the attempt to reverse, or in any manner override this law must signally fail. Every man who enters upon the religious life, comes at once and fully under the dominion of this law, and must abide by its provisions. He does not, by a single stride, attain to a full spiritual development. He may get a hope it is true, a hope of pardon and acceptance with God, but that is only the dawning of the religious

life. As compared to the hope that will grow up within him and come to maturity, as the fruit of an experience gained after years of patient "waiting beneath the furnace blast," this hope of the young convert is as the feeblest infancy entering the lists against stalwart manhood.

It is no more sure to abide the strain put upon it by temptation, than was the hope of the sanguine Peter. In a little time, the hope which was so clear and bright, and so certain a dependence, may have utterly perished; or, else, its brightness be so obscured as to yield no comfort to its possessor. It is a hope of which one may be thoroughly ashamed when tribulation or persecution ariseth for the Word's sake.

An experience they may also have, it may be full of gladness, and its recital may be as sweet a melody in the ears of a mature Christian, as is the prattle of early childhood to fond old age. But he has no such experience as patience has begotten—no such experience of God and His truth, and His faithfulness, as begins in tribulation. He has had no discovery of One like unto the Son of God, walking with him in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. And why





should he, while, as yet, he has not been exposed to its consuming heat? Nay, he must be subject to the law of a spiritual progression which demands that experience shall follow patience, and patience tribulation.

It is equally evident that the establishment of this law, or order of succession, explains some of the more unfavorable phenomena of Christian experience, so called, such as the lack of confidence some have in their hope, and the loss of hope in others; as also, the humiliating confession of vast numbers, that they have nothing interesting to communicate; that they have made no new discoveries in the vast realm of spiritual knowledge, and have gained no higher plane in religious attainment.

The only satisfactory explanation of the phenomena, is, that the order of the working is somehow interrupted.

There is, it may be, a declining to do the things incumbent upon the Christian, the things which involve more or less of self-denial, hardship and suffering. And so, they escape the tribulation which finds no office to fulfil. Or, if there be tribulation, there is no patience under it, but murmuring and rebellion instead. Thus, the law of succession being broken, there is none of

the fruits of patience—no rich religious experience, and no lively hope of the glory of God.

No true experience can be told, until the soul has reached the patience point. And no hope can find confirmation and attain to assurance, unless fed on the ripened fruit of experience.

It must, therefore, be evident, that in the establishment of this law of succession, those persons stand in their own light, who, while anxious to secure a good hope of heaven, and enjoy a rich religious experience here, and have the material out of which to frame religious discourse, deprecate tribulation as if it were a calamity.

We mean not that we are to *seek* tribulation as if it were a good thing in itself and a thing to be desired for its own sake; but when it comes in the ordering of God's providence, when we encounter it in the way of our duty, we are to meet it with a steady courage and a cheerfulness that will convert the trial into a triumph. In a word, we are to "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations."

Surely, then, in the establishment of this law, or order of succession, we infer a sufficient warrant for the act of glorying in tribulation.

The results justify the glorying. The patience, the experience, the hope, that come out of tribulation, are the full equivalent of the sorrow and the pain of the furnace fire.

There remains but a single suggestion for those in whom, manifestly, tribulation does not work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, but directly the opposite. Does not the fact that there is an absence of such working in the character of any man professing godliness, go far toward disparaging such a profession? The law of spiritual growth in the soul has neither been repealed nor modified since it was written down by the apostle to the Gentiles. To become more impatient, irritable, and morose, the more you are tried; to grow into a peevish and complaining old man or woman, whose presence is the dread of childhood and the grief of riper years, as the sorrows of the earthly pilgrimage multiply, is an ominous sign. To find an experience, once comforting and sustaining, waxing lean and shrivelled, and empty of all joyousness; to find a hope, once bright, waning, languishing, burning down into its very socket, is significant of some radical and alarming defect of character. It may be well questioned, whether in such a heart, the love of God

is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

7. All growth in the kingdom of heaven *keeps pace with the advance in holiness*. An increase in holiness is sure to carry with it a growth in all other directions, while sin ever retards growth. Christ understood this, and hence, in that memorable prayer for His disciples just before His betrayal, He incorporated the petition. "Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth." Wherefore, growth in the matter of sanctification, properly supplements what has gone before under this general division of our subject.

By what means Christ hopes to secure the sanctification of His followers is made clear—"Sanctify them through . . . *truth*." In His judgment the truth is the sanctifying instrument. And the kind of truth adapted to such a purpose, He does not leave to conjecture. "Holy Father, . . . Sanctify them through Thy truth." He even specifies the variety of that truth, which He regards as the chosen instrumentality, the truth contained in the Holy Scriptures—"Thy word."

Bible truth—not one variety of that truth, but every variety—historical, didactic, hortatory;

truth in the form of precept and doctrine; truth contained in promise and threatening; truth comforting and alarming.

It is manifest, that in order to secure the sanctifying effect of God's truth in any given case, certain conditions must be fulfilled, and to these let us first direct our attention.

(a) In order that truth may sanctify, the mind must be brought *in contact* with it. As soon might you expect iron to fuse without bringing it in contact with the furnace heat, as to look for sanctification where the Word of God has not by some process reached the human understanding.

(b) The mind must be *familiarized* with the truth in order to gain the benefit of the sanctifying process. If the truth is simply proclaimed in the ear, and passes out of the mind so soon as it passes in, making no more impression than does the musket ball as it glances from the ironside, it will not prove to any extent a sanctifier. There must be *adhesion* as well as contact. By frequent reading of the Scriptures, and better still by treasuring up their contents in the memory, making them the subject of meditation, turning them over and over in the mind until they become the warp and woof

of the everyday thoughts, the Word of God will become familiarized to the candidate for sanctification, and will be to his soul like an atmosphere in which there is no impurity.

(c) The mind must also *comprehend* the truth. Its true meaning must be discerned. The *non-comprehension*, or *mis-apprehension* of any truth taught orally or by the printed page, necessarily obstructs its due influence. The learning of truth by rote, as a child might learn a theorem in geometry without understanding it, avails nothing in the matter of sanctification. There may, indeed, be a form of sound words stored up in the memory, but so long as their meaning is not grasped, they are no better than so much rubbish.

That was as philosophical, as it was ingenuous, a reply of the eunuch to the inquiry of Philip, if he understood the passage he was reading from Isaiah, "How can I except some man should guide me?"

It must therefore be admitted as a part of this condition, that its fulfilment requires a very considerable degree of familiarity with the truth, with so much instruction, study, and meditation, as is necessary to render it intelligible. So that, whoever neglects the opportu-

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nities which offer to hear the Word of God expounded, or to meditate upon what he has heard, will be properly classed with those who are "ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

(d) The truth, in order to sanctify, must be *yielded to* and not *resisted*.

The truth will produce more or less conviction in respect to duty, danger, and privilege. By yielding to this conviction—discharging the duty, avoiding the danger, embracing the privilege, in the way the truth indicates, the sanctifying process will be carried forward. Whoever sets himself, in any manner, to resist the truth, or whoever would evade the just conclusions to which it would compel him, interposes an insuperable barrier to his own sanctification. Prayer for sanctification under such circumstances would be a solemn farce.

With this understanding of the essential conditions of sanctification, we are prepared to consider *how* the truth sanctifies those in whom these conditions are fulfilled.

How is the mind, the heart, the life of the believer affected by the Word of God—the Word with which he is brought in contact, is made familiar, comprehends in its spiritual signifi-

cance, and allows to have control over him? We answer, as nearly as we are able, in accordance with the inspired record of what are the varied effects of the Word of God.

(1) We have that Word represented as a *mirror* of great reflecting power, a mirror into which all men may look to see themselves, and from which they will get back a perfectly truthful image of what they are in the sight of a holy God.

There will be no exaggeration. If, as they behold themselves in this mirror, they appear to be ugly and deformed, if they appear unlovely and hateful, diseased and vile, guilty and lost, then they are so. The mirror has no flaw in it, that it should render an imperfect image.

If now, they are not like the man "who beholdeth his natural face in the mirror, and going away straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," they will surely find that the view they have gotten of themselves, will have a very salutary effect upon their character and life. It will break every bone of pride within them. It will rend the garment of self-righteousness, underneath which they have hid away their moral deformity, and so will remove



the chief obstacle to the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit.

It will bring them low at the footstool of sovereign mercy, prepared through a humble but just view of their own demerit, to receive the grace of sanctification. But more, from the same mirror they get just as clear and perfect a reflection of the image of God. His worthiness is as manifest as their unworthiness; His holiness as their sinfulness. And there is nothing that takes hold on the sensibilities of the human soul with such renovating power as a true view of God, such as is reflected from His Word. If anything were required to deepen the sense of his need of sanctification, this would do it most effectively. As God is revealed to him in all his infinite perfections, he is ready to exclaim, as Isaiah did: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Then, also, is he prepared to have the live coal from off the altar, laid by the seraphim upon his mouth, with the message, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged."

(2) The Word of God is a *sword*, two-edged,

sharp, penetrating, powerful—having a discerning faculty, as if it had eyes wherewith to read the thoughts and intents of men's hearts.

One of the principal obstructions in the process of sanctification is the selfishness of the governing purpose. Oftentimes, when we think the work of sanctification is well under way, we are surprised, shocked, and humiliated by the discovery that we have been under the control of some unholy motive,

Or, if the motive should remain unchallenged, the general run of the thoughts may be perverse through the taint of worldliness, or the corruption of the natural propensity. But a very large portion of the time we seem not to realize this imperfectness. Our hearts deceive us. We think far more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.

The Word of God, "piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," lays bare the whole internal structure of the human soul; it searches its profoundest depths; it illumines its darkest labyrinths, so that we can read the hand-writing on the wall of its most secret chamber. The result is not unlike that which follows the exposure to the midday sun of the bare roots of a noxious vege-

tation—it kills to a certainty, what every other process has, at the best, only impeded in its growth.

(3) The Word of God is a *crucible* into which character is placed, and subjected to a furnace heat, which separates between the dross and the precious metal. There is nothing like this Word to produce such a separation. When it was foretold of Christ, that he would sit as a “refiner and purifier of silver,” the primary allusion was, doubtless, to the effect of His teaching. The dross that had gathered thick upon the Jewish character, quickly felt the action of the intense heat which His words generated. That which aforetime men had esteemed the highest type of piety, began to perish under the refining process. And by the time Christ’s three years personal ministry in Judea closed, it was apparent enough that there was but precious little of the pure silver in the Jewish Church. The religious pretensions of the Pharisees and scribes were only dross. Christ’s words, brought home by the Holy Spirit, still tries, as by fire, the character of those who come under their influence. Day by day, the dross becomes separated and passes off. The offensive things—the imperfections, im-

purities, inconsistencies, which so disfigure and mar the symmetry and perfectness of the spiritual man, gradually disappear under the refining ordeal.

(4) The Word of God is a *winnowing fan*, whose office it is to separate the chaff from the wheat. Not only in the making-up of character, but in the compounding of doctrine, there is an entering in of much that is trashy, frivolous, and enfeebling. The veriest follies oftentimes come to us with high-sounding titles, and flaming testimonials, and claim a place with our most holy and precious things. There is, perhaps, nothing positively sinful, so far as we can discover, but it is all chaff. If it were utterly blown away, we should have all the wheat left, and that it is upon which our souls must feed, if we would find nourishment. Hence, the sooner we come at the wheat the better. Aught else that is suffered to occupy our minds, must necessarily impede the work of sanctification, while the Word that separates the chaff from the wheat must in so doing forward that work.

(5) The Word of God acts as a *precipitant*. A strange medley of philosophy and science, and fable, so befogs the intellect that men are often heard to protest, they don't know what to be-

lieve. They see nothing clearly. The truth to their minds has no certain connections; it lacks system and consistency; it is self-contradictory and involved. It is scarcely necessary to say, that a mind in such condition is unprepared for sanctification. It must first undergo a process of illumination. The mists must be scattered. Something must be seen clearly. Something must become fixed and settled. There must be light enough to reveal some of the cardinal points of a true religious faith. The Word of God does just what the exigency requires. With a steady, clear light it penetrates the chaos of troubled and conflicting thoughts, bringing order out of confusion. The unreal, the false, and the illogical is precipitated, and becomes as the worthless sediment. The mind is clarified. The connections of truth are reestablished. Doubts disappear from the mental horizon, and the spoilings of a vain philosophy are ended.

(6) The Word of God acts as an *antidote* to all forms and degrees of unbelief and error—to the poison that is more fatal than the poison of asps—even after that poison has already infected the soul with its deadly contamination. Nothing will kill error so effectually as the Word of God, energized and brought home by

the Holy Spirit. The most ponderous argument, the most unanswerable logic, the most convincing demonstration, which human wisdom has wielded against error has never uprooted it so thoroughly as a "Thus saith the Lord." In the work of sanctification, nothing is more essential than the elimination of every dangerous error. Holiness cannot thrive, if it can so much as exist, in an atmosphere of falsehood. The embrace of a heresy instantly suspends the process of sanctification begun hopefully in the soul, which can be resumed only as truth reasserts its supremacy.

(7) The Word of God is an *emancipator*. The shackles which trammel the intellect and enslave the conscience, fall off when the Word of God enters. "And ye shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." It frees from the dominion of ignorance and from the superstition engendered of that ignorance. It corrects the false views we have of worldly things, and so emancipates us from the fashion of this world which passeth away. It frees from the erroneous views we have of death, and so emancipates us from those slavish fears of the last enemy which keeps so many all their life long in a bondage entirely inconsis-

ent with a real and progressive sanctification. It frees from the dominion of the law of sin in the members, and so from that defilement which neutralizes all holy aspirations.

(8) The Word of God acts as a *compass*—a sure guide to man in the darkness and the tempest. Oft on the voyage of life, the whole sky is overcast, and for many days neither sun or stars appear. His own wisdom and the wisdom of his fellow avail him nothing. There is no fixed point, no sign in the heavens above, no way-mark on the trackless ocean by which to steer his course. Unless God guide, he is as liable to turn his prow in the wrong direction as in the right. If to be sanctified, is to go on our way with a sure guidance, then must we have a moral compass that will never give us misdirection. And such a compass is the Word of God. It will light up the darkest night that ever shut down on mortal vision. It will hold the helm steadily in the fiercest tempest that ever swept over the ocean of life. The man who would cleanse his way, preserving it from misdirection and from sin, must take heed thereunto according to God's Word.

(9) The Word of God is a *trumpet*, which gives no uncertain sound. It wakes the spir-

itual slumbers of the soul. It startles by its shrill notes those whose burial in guilt is so deep, that no eloquence of man, and no warning voice out of the unseen world would disturb the fatal repose. To be dead to any sin—to be living in unconscious guilt, as men often are, even while praying earnestly for sanctification, is to obstruct wholly all advance in holiness.

If sanctification is effected through the Word of God, as the instrument divinely appointed and approved, then, manifestly, we may not expect to be sanctified through any other means. There may be truth in science, and truth in philosophy, and truth in history, and truth in mathematics, and truth in metaphysics; but it is not truth in any or in all these forms, that is to fulfil the office of Sanctifier. Truth in all these forms has a high and holy mission to fulfil, and how is it straightened unless it is fulfilling that mission.

But it is not that truth which transforms, renews and fits for heaven. The truth that does all this is the Word of God embraced in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

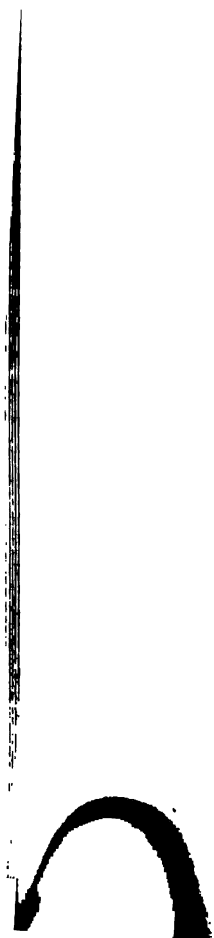
Wherefore, the abundant use of that Word must be the condition of a rapid progress in sanctification. The superficial attention given



to the inspired volume—the almost entire neglect of that volume in some quarters, would account for the slow, irregular and almost imperceptible progress made in sanctification. A right division of the Word that gives to every one a portion in due season, is the mode of promoting holiness of character and life which will be most successful in the hands of the ministry, while a patient, thorough and daily searching of the Scriptures will be the most profitable exercise which those who are seeking personal holiness can employ.

## THE PRAYING

1. The Place of Prayer
2. The Need of Patience
3. The Two Bands
4. The Prevailing Plea
5. The Importunate Widow
6. The Syrophœnician Woman
7. The Prayer for Sick



## VI

### THE PRAYING

All who are found walking on the highway of holiness, have given heed to the words, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Prayer can never be *inopportune*. If we would experience the consolation of the ransomed; if we would endure satisfactorily the scriptural tests of character and hope; if we would be growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, we must "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

To have clear views on certain phases of prayer is of greatest practical moment.

To conceal aught that God has revealed to any one of us on this subject, is an offense comparable to that which hides the discovery of some sure remedy for a terrible physical malady.

True, any one man is not supposed to have all the light that has been shed on any phase of the prayer theme; but what light he has, be it much or little, he is bound to let shine for others' benefit.

1. *The place of prayer.*

In a time of great affliction, during the Babylonish captivity, God sent a comforting message to His people, to the effect that, when the full period of their humiliation should end, the mountains of Israel would recover their fruitfulness, and the waste cities would be filled with flocks of men, such as were seen in Jerusalem at the solemn feasts, when the population of the city was frequently doubled, and the ability to furnish entertainment was taxed to the utmost.

For these significant tokens of returning prosperity God had said, through His messenger, "I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." (Ezek. 36:37.)

The *place* of prayer, and the *usefulness* of prayer in that place, were clearly set forth in that message.

The question asked by the wicked in Job's day, and still asked, not by the wicked only, but by some of the good, who are perplexed with the theoretical and theological aspects of the subject, "What *profit* shall we have if we pray unto Him?" is not insoluble to one who is willing to receive the instruction infolded in the aforesaid message.

The place assigned therein to prayer is the

place it has always held and will continue to hold to the end of time.


Evidently, its place is not that of *control*. It changes neither the divine feeling nor purpose. They are susceptible of no change for the better, and so they must not be changed. It is to be presumed that any change would be detrimental to the interests of man, as well as detract from the glory of God.

The place of prayer, on the contrary, is that of the most absolute submission, in which there exists not even a wish to change the divine feeling or purpose; but the heart is always saying with unaffected sincerity, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

"Prayer is appointed to convey  
The blessings God designs to give."

It brings us into entire harmony with His plans.

But, some one will say, "If things are sure to happen just as God has arranged for them, and if prayer does not at all modify His plans, what possible benefit can there be in the exercise? And still more, if what is to be is clearly fore-shown, as in this message to His ancient people—if God's purpose is revealed, what genuine interest can be awakened in the exercise? How



can prayer under such circumstances be anything more than a form?"

These are fair questions, and should be fairly met.

It is plainly within the power of God, as it is His undoubted privilege, to prescribe the *terms*, be they hard or easy, upon which He will bless His people.

These terms, when prescribed, become at once a part of the divine arrangement, as much so as is the blessing itself. Indeed, without the terms specified, the blessing might be no more a blessing but a curse instead. The terms fulfilled, there is a preparedness to receive the blessing which will secure the full profit thereof to those upon whom it is conferred. If God sees, as we may be sure He does, that prayer will give the best security for such a preparedness, why should He not say, "Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel"?

If He has said it, surely it is not for us to challenge the reasonableness of the saying. We may be certain that He has not acted arbitrarily in the matter. It is not necessary that we should understand and be able to explain, *how* and *where* the profit comes in. It is sufficient for us to know that God's ordinance

requires prayer; and, surely, it is not hard to see that our highest interest, as well as His glory, requires that we should not resist His ordinance.

We assume that He knows, even as the parent does, what advantage will be derived by Himself and His children from the requirement to ask ere they receive, and as the condition of receiving.

The table is carefully spread with provisions for all the children, and they understand the fact; and yet, they are instructed to ask all the same, as if they were ignorant of the parental purpose. The parent knows, if the children do not, that it does them good to honor him by asking for the things which his bounty has provided, and provided evidently for them.

The ordinance of prayer is as much "settled in heaven," as is the ordinance which regulates the movement of the heavenly bodies. "I will yet for this be inquired of," is as absolute an expression of the divine purpose, as is the "I will increase them with men like a flock." The interdependence of the two *I will's* is so plain, that to raise the question whether there can be any profit in prayer, is to question the profit of an increase that is dependent on prayer, as de-




pendent as the fruit of the tree is upon its foliage. In the nature of things, you can't have the one without the other—the fruit without the foliage, or the increase without the prayer.


And what conceivable advantage can there be in praying *in the dark*?

Prayer is not out of place, indeed, where there is no open vision, but prayer under such circumstances, must lack much of the boldness that inspires it when there is such vision. A man who merely suspects he is delving in the earth in the vicinity of hid treasure, may be somewhat earnest in his seeking, but will the certain knowledge that he is working in the right direction and is sure to strike a rich lead, rob him of the stimulus he felt while assurance was wanting?

In prayer, the most essential thing is to ascertain, if possible, the divine purpose, in order that the suppliant may bring his petition in the line of that purpose. Hence, there seems to be no hesitation on God's part in announcing beforehand, under certain discouraging circumstances, what He has determined to do in behalf of His people. He evidently does not apprehend that they will take undue advantage of such an announcement, and grow lax



in the service of prayer. He rather expects that the disclosures He makes of things to come, will not only furnish a reliable basis for the argument in prayer, a no inconsiderable advantage to the suppliant, but will prove a distinct and powerful incentive to prayer in all its stages. None of the worthies of the old economy lacked anything of fervency in petitions for blessings foretold. And the same might be said of all true saints under the new economy. None of them grow sluggish in prayer because they are asking something known to be in accordance with the divine purpose. He who can, in the argument of his prayer, urge as a consideration why he should receive the thing sought, "For thou hast promised this thing unto thy servant," is not only occupying high vantage ground, but is enjoying the most healthy stimulus possible in prayer. In the circumstances which environed the Israelites during the Babylonish captivity, circumstances naturally depressing, what message was more likely to keep them up to the duty of prayer, than the one actually sent, in which was revealed not merely the unmeasured benefit of which they were to be the recipients, but the condition of its bestowment.



How natural for them to say: "We will make sure of the benefit by inquiring for it with unflagging earnestness; and, moreover, seeing that God does not inform us as to when the praying era commences or how long it must continue, we will begin to pray at once, and will neither intermit the service or grow weary therein, lest we thereby put in jeopardy our claim to the benefit, whose coming has been foreshown."

If some greatly enfeebled and discouraged Christian church, should receive a message from heaven, through a true prophet, to the effect that God would, in the course of a few months, increase them with men like a flock, adding hundreds to their membership, on the sole condition that they should inquire of Him for the blessing, would they not stir themselves up to pray unceasingly? Would not the incitement to prayer be well-nigh irresistible?

In the first year of the reign of Darius, "*Daniel understood by books*, the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." And it was this understanding of the divine purpose, that caused Daniel to "set his

face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings and sackcloth and ashes." Elijah knew that there was "a sound of abundance of rain," but that knowledge did not render him presumptuous in the matter of asking. And he went up to the top of Carmel, and cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and, in that posture, prayed with unwonted earnestness, and ceased not until the little cloud rising out of the sea, the sure harbinger of the swift coming benefit, made its appearance. Had he failed to pray, which, of course, he would not do, and God *knew* he would not, the rain would not have come.

The fact that I hold a fellow man's note, with promise to pay on demand, does not render me careless in the matter of asking. Without that promise, I might be more anxious as to the outcome, but with it I am very confident that the asking will not be in vain. But I do not expect the promise to be redeemed until I ask for its redemption. The note is not due until then, and the drawer is under no obligation to anticipate the demand made in the asking.

So the promise made in the aforesaid message, and indeed, every promise of God is re-

deemable *on demand*. To presume, under such circumstances, that the asking is without profit is an arrant folly of which no one can be guilty without putting himself in the position of the sailors who were fleeing out of the ship subsequent to the revelation made to Paul, that not a life should be lost, and who may have been saying among themselves, "What use for us to remain longer in the ship, if the angel of God has given Paul an assurance of safety for all?" Concerning whom it was necessary for Paul to say, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." It was Paul's understanding of the nature of God's saving ordinance, as it should be ours also, that the *means* to the end is as much a matter of divine arrangement, as is the *end* itself.


If the question should now be repeated, will not things happen precisely as God has arranged for them? We answer, *certainly*.

Hence, if He has arranged a place for prayer in His plans, and He assuredly has, then prayer must come in, and He knows it will come in and come in, without questioning its usefulness in the place assigned it. He knows that men who earnestly desire any good thing will ask for it, and that the asking will be quite as fervent

when they are assured beforehand that the thing for which they ask is in the line of His settled purpose and is actually promised.

It may be assumed that in every case where God has obligated Himself to confer some great benefit, like the increase of His people with men as a flock, the condition, I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, is either expressed or implied; and to expect the benefit, without fulfilling this condition, is a presumption—a going athwart God's plan; while to inquire without believing in the usefulness of prayer in such a case, is a mockery.

It is not material that we should know by what means God will fulfil His engagement. We are to ask and expect Him to do what He proposes to do. "*I will increase you with men like a flock.*" I will set in motion currents of influence whose irresistible trend shall be in the direction of such increase. Mountain barriers shall not obstruct My purpose, for I will tunnel those barriers. Trackless wastes or howling wildernesses shall not hinder the execution of that purpose, for I will cause My springs to break out amid the arid solitudes of the one, and send My chariots of iron and flame to



blaze a highway for My people through the other.

"And they shall say, this land which was desolate is become like Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined places are become fenced and are inhabited." "*I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.*"

2. *Need of Patience.*

A prime element in all successful praying is *patience*. A hurry-call on our part does not impose a corresponding obligation on God's part to do for us *at once* what He engages to do. There may be reasons for deferring the fulfilment of His promises which He must respect; and these reasons may not be, and probably will not be revealed. While we wait we are apt to become impatient. But that will not help matters—it may even hinder.

"I waited *patiently* for the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and He inclined unto me and heard my cry." And we had best do the same.

"Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."


A promise has been made. It is quite immaterial what the promise is, if so be God is its author. The expectation raised as to its fulfil-

ment is to be satisfied or disappointed. If the fulfilment is delayed beyond the time fixed in the mind of him who supposes himself to be the promisee, or, if there seem to arise obstructions in the way of its fulfilment, whereat faith is likely to stagger, then comes in the trial where patience is called into requisition.

To every promise of God there is a condition annexed, which may be expressed in terms, or implied. Until the suppliant has complied with that condition, he cannot be a lawful claimant under the promissory instrument. Moreover, if his claim as the promisee is not disputed, yet must he be at the time he makes his claim, in such a *moral* state, that the fulfilment of the promise will not be to him a greater damage than benefit.

He may be in such a selfish state, that if he should receive the thing promised, he would consume it upon his lusts.

Of necessity, that would wholly vitiate, for the time being, his claim. God is under the most solemn obligation not to minister to any man's unrighteousness. Until the suppliant is prepared to receive and rightly use the promised good, God is fully justified in withholding it, be the seeking of it ever so earnest.





The suppliant oftentimes becomes impatient under a delay for which he is himself responsible. Yet he speaks of his disappointment as if he thought God was dealing unjustly by him.

He is restless, vexed, and almost or quite ready to charge Him foolishly. The spirit he manifests under his disappointment disproves his right to prosecute his claim. Nothing, at least, can be plainer than his need of patience.

It must be understood, that every promise embraces the proviso, that a delay in its fulfilment demanded by the foreseen exigencies of the divine administration, shall always be in order. It may be inexpedient to confer the good promised just now, seeing that there are other parties whose preparedness must be considered.

"Lest Israel vaunt themselves and say, our own hand hath saved us," it is expedient that there be a delay until such time as this peril is overpast. Meanwhile, there is nothing to hinder a distinct assurance to the suppliant, that his prayer is heard. But he will need patience, even as Abraham and others needed it, while awaiting the open manifestation of that of which he holds the pledge.

What is patience—the genuine article?

Surely, it is not *indifference*. A man who feels nothing of all the sorrows and disappointments that fall to his portion in this world, whose nature is cold, even to frigidity, or who has become callous through long continued suffering, may be girt about with a stony hardness that knows no melting mood, but that is not patience. True patience is predicable only of a sensitive being who is quick to feel; a being, perhaps, of a high-strung, nervous organism who trembles all over with the effort to suppress the struggling impatience that is ready to burst forth into consuming flame.

Nor is patience a synonym of *indolence*. A man may contentedly wait for something to turn up, because he is unwilling to exert himself in a legitimate way to better his condition. He is a sluggard, and accepts the sluggard's portion, be it for the better or the worse, and is willing to saddle the responsibility of what comes on Providence. With a great deal of coolness, he professes his willingness to wait on the Lord, when the fact is, he is too spiritually indolent to stir himself up to take hold on God.

Patience can only be the product of activity put under constraint. It gathers up energy, it

accumulates force, while it waits in submission to a divine purpose.

Patience never loses sight of, or relaxes its grasp upon, the promise that is the pole-star of its hope. The lapse of years, during which causes have been in operation to discourage the soul, and multiply the obstructions to the fulfilment of the promise, while the eye has been growing dim with age, and the heart heavy through long watchings, has not relaxed the clinging to the word of the promise.

Nor does patience consent to receive something else in place of the good promised.

It is often said, "If God does not give us the thing we ask for, He may give us something else." And this is no doubt true where we are guided in our asking by some general promise. But where the promise is specific, a definite pledge having been made and accepted, there is no consent to receive something else.

The son promised to Abraham, which Sarah should bare to him, was *the* son that patience in him waited for. Nothing else, however valuable in other eyes or in his own, could have been accepted in Isaac's stead.

The better, the enduring substance in Heaven,—“the great recompense of reward,”—

looked forward to by the persecuted saints at Jerusalem, was not to be exchanged for something equally valuable. Patience had accepted the promise as its guide, and could not, after enduring so much already for the sake of that reward, afford to cast away its confidence that the heavenly substance would yet be theirs.

It is a miserable trick of the human fancy that would barter away a birthright blessing. Patience will not appease its hunger by any such barter.

Nor yet, does patience waver when obstacles unexpectedly arise, or when appearances are discouraging. It was said to Daniel, in explanation of the delay in answering his prayer: "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days."

It would not be strange, if a similar obstruction should often be interposed in the way of immediate answers to prayer.

The angel of blessing may be withstood for many a day by some agent of evil.

There is no evidence that Daniel wavered during the one and twenty days, while his

spirit was oppressed by the somberness of an unlooked for obstruction to the success of his petition.

The phantom of disappointment hovered near, but patience turned a deaf ear to its every insinuation.

If all went smoothly on, patience would not be so rare a virtue. But, where the soul has to struggle through difficulties which grow more numerous and formidable as it advances into their midst, then the exercise of patience is not so easy.

Patience does not resort to some ill-advised measure to secure the fulfilment of the promise.

The suggestion made to, and entertained by Abraham, as to how God would fulfil His Word to him did not help the matter. It was pure officiousness that undertook to supply the link that was supposed to be wanting in His providential arrangements—an officiousness that was made to recoil fearfully upon the intermeddling party.

Shrewd guesses are made as to the mode in which God will execute His purposes, but no one just knows the plot He has arranged. And the thicker the plot grows, the more surely will it defy the attempts of man to unravel it. Pa-

tience leaves it with God to fulfil His promise in whatever way His wisdom shall direct, assured that His way is the safest and the best.

Patience does not fret or complain of the delay in the fulfilment of the promise, as if it suspected God was trifling with its hopes by insincere proffers. It believes Him to be solemnly in earnest, and to be intending to do more and better than the expectations He has raised would require. It considers it a token of His kind regard, that He should make known His purpose to bless, and should enter into covenant obligations to do so, long before the time when the circumstances would justify Him in fulfilling His Word.

It conceives that, *with* the promise, it would be far easier to wait than without it; and that the promise is itself an antepast to the feast He is preparing, whose appointments gather magnificence just in proportion as they are removed from the hurry and the bustle of the present. During the long period of waiting, patience has all the delights of anticipation added to those in which it is sure to participate when the promise is redeemed. Why should it murmur at delay? Would it have been so much more agreeable to have lived all these years with no

anticipation of joys to come, no bright bow of promise spanning the dark cloud of the near or the remote future? Would Abraham, who rejoiced to see Christ's day, and, seeing it from afar, was glad, have been happier, if there had been no promise? Would any of the patriarchs, who died in faith not having received the promise, have been more content under a dispensation without a promise to enliven it? What occasion then for complaining can there be in this superabundant goodness of God, this delightful antepast of good things kept in reserve for those that wait? If delay meant failure, as it might, and often does in human engagements, then might there be just ground for uneasiness. If the longer the promise ran, the scantier would be the blessing, then might impatience seem almost a virtue. If delay meant even indefinite postponement, there might be some extenuation for the offense of the murmurer.

But God will meet all His engagements fully. There will be no postponement, no discount from the face value, no failure even to a jot or tittle of His Word.

Patience bears willingly whatever of trial and suffering falls to the lot of those whose office it is to wait while the promise is maturing,

and the day of its redemption draweth nigh.

Taking the prophets as an example of suffering affliction, and counting them happy which endure, why should their admirers be reluctant to share the conditions of that happiness? If there is no affliction, there can be none of the exquisite joy which those know who have triumphed over suffering.

3. In obedience to the divine command, Jacob was returning to Canaan, the land of his kindred, when intelligence reached him that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Suspecting he might be coming with evil intent, Jacob was "greatly afraid and distressed."

As a measure of precaution he divided the people that were with him, and also the flocks, and herds, and camels, into two bands, saying, "If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape." As night shuts in, he betakes himself to prayer, and says: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which Thou hast shewed unto



Thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." The reference in the last paragraph is plainly to the twofold division he had just made of the people that were with him, and of the flocks, and herds, and camels. But what had that to do with the argument of his prayer? How could the fact that he had become two bands, be a reason for the fulfilment of the promise to which he had made his appeal, a promise given him at Bethel on his outward-bound journey some twenty years before, when his *staff* was his only worldly possession?

Evidently he regarded this as a fulfilment *in part* of that promise. And he pleads this partial fulfilment as a consideration superadded to the reason found in the promise itself, for the fulfilment of all that remained. It was what an indorsed payment on a note is, an evidence that the maker of the note recognizes his obligation to pay in full. The note cannot be outlawed, if within a certain period a payment, ever so small, has been made. That payment ratifies, so to speak, the promise to pay found in the body of the instrument. It is a confession of obligation to pay all that remains unpaid, be it much or little.

In fulfilling His promise, God has not obligated Himself to do at once, all He has engaged to do. If He fulfils by *installments* ever so small, and at intervals ever so remote, He yet keeps His engagement with us according to its true intent. "I will . . . drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before thee. I will not drive them out before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased and inherit the land." (Ex. 23: 28-30.) Moreover, the fulfillment of a promise by installments may be, as in the case just cited, the very best way of fulfilling it.

It is surely better to receive the bread for the sustenance of our lives, day by day, rather than all at once. It is also better that the promise of grace for our spiritual exigencies should be coupled with the reasonable condition, "As thy day is," rather than that we should be encouraged to expect its redemption in advance of the exigency—dying grace, for instance, years before our dying day. Besides, it may be impossible for God to do for us all He is pledged to do, unless He is permitted to do somewhat to-day,

and somewhat to-morrow, and somewhat on the day following. To do wisely, and what He cannot do wisely He will not do at all, may require years, possibly a lifetime. Nay, a lifetime may be insufficient. It was not sufficient in the case of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob. The legacy of blessing was for children, and children's children, unto the third and fourth generations. The worthies enumerated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, are represented as not having received the promise in its full fruition, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"—in their blessedness. It was necessary for them to wait until the long succession of co-inheritors could come in for their share of the common blessing.

"And I saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed,

even as they were, should be fulfilled." (Rev. 6: 9-11.)

If a man has died leaving an estate by will, to be divided share and share alike among his children, when the youngest child has attained to his majority, the older children cannot obtain their shares in advance. No matter how numerous the offspring or how eager they are to enter upon their inheritance, they must possess their souls in patience until the last born comes of age.

The largest and most precious promises embrace many beside ourselves, or our near or remote kindred. A blessing whose fullness I can exhaust, that ends where my pilgrimage ends, is not to be compared with a blessing that extends through many successive generations, and widens out more and more, until it embraces, not only children and children's children, but the whole human race. What were the few people found in Jacob's two bands, compared with the vast increase that followed, until his descendants were as the stars of heaven for multitude? What was even that multitude compared with all the families of the earth which were ultimately to share the blessing?

We need to outgrow our selfishness in this

direction, and be able to enter into sympathy with those who sing appreciatingly:

“How large the promise, how divine  
To Abr’am and his seed,  
The words of His extensive love,  
From age to age endure.”

We do God very great injustice, when we fail to recognize the successive steps by which He has been, and is, fulfilling His promises to us—when, on the body of the instrument under which we claim, there are no endorsements in our hand-writing of payments already made. If you were to make me a note of a thousand dollars, payable in such sums, and at such times, as your ability to pay would allow, and then, after all payments, save the last, had been made, you should ask for the note, and on turning it over, should find no endorsements thereon of previous payments; what would you think of me? It is as if Jacob, on the occasion referred to, had overlooked all God had done for him during the score of years of wonderful prosperity that had elapsed since with his staff he had passed over the Jordan.

*When God has begun to fulfil a promise, it is certain He will make a finish. The fulfilment of a part, however small, draws after it, the fulfilment of what remains. God has no*

broken threads of purpose, no fragmentary plans. He may be long in finishing, but having once begun a good work He is sure to carry it to completion. The top-stone *must* be brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.


Jacob, therefore, had the right of it, when he plead the fulfilment of God's promise in part, as a reason why He should save him from the hand of Esau. Was it not just as impossible that the two bands He had given him should be sacrificed, as that Abraham should lose the Isaac in whom his seed was to be called? He may require Jacob, even as He required Abraham, to tread on the very verge of disaster, but, at the critical moment, deliverance must come. The ram, caught in the thicket by his horns, must put in his appearance.

Jacob simply came in for his rightful share of the large remainder of the promise made to Abraham. He was asking only for another installment of what Abraham received when Isaac was given back to him as one raised from the dead. The escape of his two bands from destruction was, doubtless, as essential to the redemption of the original promise, as was the earlier rescue of Isaac.

In our pleadings with God, even where we

recognize with thanksgiving what He has already done for us, have we not almost invariably failed to comprehend the exceeding forcefulness of an argument in prayer, based on a *partial* fulfilment of the promise we are pleading, which doubly secures to us the fulfilment of any possible remainder. Do we not in our petitions when the grasp of our importunity seems strongest, allow our minds to linger in the provisions of the promise itself, instead of advancing to that which is in the line of its gracious fulfilment?

When the servant of Elijah reported a little cloud no larger than a man's hand rising out of the sea, the prophet knew his prayer was answered in part, and that it was certain to be answered in full. Hence, there was no reason why he himself should linger on the mountain top until the heaven was black with clouds and wind for the balance due him on the promise. Nor, was there reason why he should hesitate to send Ahab the message: "Prepare, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not"; or, having sent it, should fail to show his own confidence in it, by girding up his loins and running before his king to the entrance of Jezreel, outstripping him in the race for shelter from the



gathering storm. There was, evidently, in the prophet's mind, no question that the little cloud discernable on the far-off horizon, was drawing after it, the great rain, which was coming with a speed that admitted of no delay on the part of those who would, either in chariot or on foot, escape its violence.

When Gideon saw, first the dew on the fleece and all the earth dry, and afterwards the fleece dry and dew upon all the ground, he knew that God had begun to fulfil His Word. The sign asked for and received, was the first installment in the fulfilment of the original pledge. "Surely, I will be with *thee*, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." On listening subsequently to the interpretation of the dream of the cake of barley bread, tumbled into the host of Midian, he received a second confirmation of the same pledge, whereby his faith in its full redemption was so greatly increased, that he "worshipped," and returning to the host of Israel, said: "Arise, for the Lord *hath*"—as if the thing were already accomplished—"delivered into your hand the host of Midian." He was sure that a partial fulfilment drew after it the large remainder.

Jonathan had a similar assurance, when the




sign asked was given him in the saying of the Philistines: "Come up to us." Turning to his armor-bearer he said, "Come up after me, for the Lord *hath* delivered them into the hand of Israel."

When David heard "a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees," he knew that in that sound was ample security that God had taken the preliminary steps in the redemption of His promise to deliver the enemy into his hand—security over and above what was contained in the word of the promise. The smiting of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gaza was certain to follow in the wake of that going in the tops of the mulberry trees.

"It was revealed unto Simeon by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death until he should see the Lord's Christ." Coming by the Spirit into the temple as the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. *For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation*, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

Only the beginning of that salvation did Simeon see; but that was all he needed to see of the fulfilment of God's promise. The fulfilment of the remainder he knew was sure.

It militates not at all against the certainty that a partial fulfilment of a promise draws after it the fulfilment of any remainder, that great obstructions present themselves and threaten to defeat the execution of the divine purpose. Such obstructions presented themselves to Abraham. Once and again Sarah seemed as good as lost to him, the power of redemption having past wholly out of his hands. As he became "well stricken in years," the scientific objection gathered force. Natural law was allied to the skepticism that ridiculed a faith that was expecting the impossible. And yet the star-spangled heavens were there all the same, and the uninterrupted career of temporal prosperity, and the occasional visits of the Angel of the Covenant, as an offset to whatever was discouraging in the situation previous to the birth of Isaac. And after his birth came the strange order for his sacrifice, obedience to which would cut off every strand of hope that in Isaac his seed should be called, save that connected with a possible resurrection from the dead.



Such an obstacle presented itself to Jacob when messengers brought him word that Esau whom he had greatly angered and who had threatened his life, was coming to meet him with four hundred men, a force sufficient, except as God interposed, to make the work of destruction swift and sure. But in the case of both these men the promise of God was not to fail in consequence of the wickedness of others, or through their own past follies.

Often the experience of these patriarchs is paralleled in the experience of those who in more recent times plead the fulfilment of God's word. Formidable obstructions present themselves, subsequent to the first installment in the fulfilment of some promise, nay, after an assurance of its full redemption has been received.

A woman who for fifteen years had been praying for the conversion of her husband, a man more or less under the dominion of the drinking habit, at length received an assurance that her prayer was heard, and that she would yet see him clothed and in his right mind. Immediately thereafter, that man broke down the family altar at which the wife and mother had ministered during all those years, he being ordinarily present and giving respectful atten-

tion. Nevertheless, within six weeks, that man was a new creature in Christ Jesus. The presumption is, that no such obstruction is ever insuperable. Nay, it is quite possible, that the very violence of opposition, the stout rebelliousness that so alarms us is one of the steps by which God is fulfilling the very promise we are pleading.

The physician under engagement to heal, administers remedies which oftentimes produce, at the first, very discouraging symptoms in the patient. He makes, perhaps, an incision which causes pulsation to increase, and temperature to rise; but in doing so, he has made an outlet for the accumulated corruption, and saved the greater disaster. The lowest depths of dangerous exhaustion may have to be reached ere the sufferer can make any real progress toward recovery. Man's extremity is oftentimes God's fitting opportunity. "I was brought *low*, and He helped me."

Having first determined, as it is surely oftentimes possible to do, the scope of a given promise, and whether we are asking more or less than God has engaged to do, then the most important thing is to ascertain whether He has begun to fulfil that promise to us. Is there

occasion for one or more endorsements in our handwriting on the promissory instrument? Has God begun a good work in *us*? Has He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son? Has He called us according to His purpose? Has He also justified? Then how surely will He glorify. Has He begun a good work in *our behalf*? Have we what is the equivalent of Jacob's two bands? In either case we are occupying high vantage-ground in our supplications for more signal displays of His grace. We do not know that God ever ceases from the process of fulfilling His promises, where there is a failure on our part to acknowledge what He has already done in that direction; but, surely, such an acknowledgment would encourage Him to do more. If we fail to note the connection between His promise and the successive stages of its fulfilment, we certainly cannot complain if the further fulfilment of the promise is suspended.

It must also be regarded as a matter of hardly secondary importance, that, whatever the promise of God may contain for *us*, and whatever we may properly appropriate, nevertheless, *ours is not an exclusive proprietorship*. All that God has engaged to do for us, we are

entitled to receive, but to receive on the ground that we are Abraham's seed and so "heirs according to the promise." We cannot separate ourselves from this relationship to Abraham, neither can we divide up the common inheritance.

Christ, the promised seed, in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed, belongs no more to us than He does to all who shall believe on Him to the end of time. The latest convert may be as full of blessedness as was Abraham who rejoiced to see Christ's day and was glad. We could not be "made perfect" in our enjoyment, or in our title to that enjoyment, except as we shared it with all the lawful inheritors.

As we go along on our earthly pilgrimage, the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled to us, even as it has been to all that have believed before us; but, after we have passed within the veil, others will plead their right to it, the same as we have done, using the same argument we have used. And, after they have gone to their fathers, others will establish their claim as clearly to the same covenant blessing. They will have their two bands, as we have had ours, and Jacob had his.

4. Were any of us to undertake to procure, by intercession, from a human governor, a very great benefit, we would inform ourselves thoroughly, in advance, as to the character of the man we hoped to influence, and, as to the considerations that would be likely to have greatest weight with him. If he had given any intimation as to what, in his estimation, was of highest moment, and we should disregard that intimation in our beseechings, we would be greatly at fault, so much so, indeed, that we might count on failure as a certainty.

And why not inquire with as much solicitude, as to the character of God and the considerations which govern Him in the bestowment of benefits, especially when they are solicited by and in the behalf of those who are confessedly unworthy?

If one plea has evidently been regarded by Him with more favor than any other, it would be inexcusable to leave that out of sight, or lay but little stress upon it in our supplications.

Should it, for instance, be revealed, that, not only in His estimation, but in reality, there is nothing of greater moment than His own glory; the instant we saw clearly that there was an intimate relation between our petition and His

glory, and that a favorable answer would certainly enhance that glory, we would have leave to press our suit with a holy importunity.

The men who, in all ages, have been most successful in supplication, have invariably relied upon this plea as the most influential if not the only one, that, in extraordinary emergencies, it was expedient to urge.

When Abraham interceded for Sodom, having in mind the extreme peril of his kinsman Lot, the consideration that most profoundly moved his own mind, was one that involved the glory of God: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from the Lord, to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

When Jacob besought the Lord for deliverance from his brother Esau, he reminded Him of His promise to deal well with him, in case he should return to his own country and kindred. "And Thou saidst, 'I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

When, in view of the sin of Aaron and His people Israel, in the matter of the golden calf,



God proposed to destroy the whole congregation, and make of Moses a great nation, the latter besought Him, saying: "Wherefore should the Egyptians say for mischief did He bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth. Remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel thy servants to whom Thou swearest, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land . . . will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever."

Again at Kadesh-Barnea, when the anger of the Lord waxed hot against the people, Moses interceded for them, urging in substance this same plea: "Destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance. . . . Look not upon the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin, lest the land whence Thou broughtest them out say, because the Lord was *not able* to bring them into the land which He had promised them, and because He *hated them*, He hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness."

When Israel was smitten at Ai, Joshua prayed, "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs upon their enemies? For

the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?"

The Psalmist often uses this plea: "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great." "But do Thou for me, O God the Lord, for Thy name's sake."

Jeremiah repeatedly urges this consideration: "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thine own name's sake. Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory; remember, break not Thy covenant with us."

Daniel prays: "O Lord, hear, O Lord hearken and do, defer not for Thine own name's sake, O my God, for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name."

The Lord Himself declared repeatedly, that He would do this or that for His own name's sake: "I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake." "For My name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise, I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off." "For Mine own sake . . . will I do it, for how shall My name be polluted?"

"Then I said, I will pour out My fury upon them to accomplish Mine anger against them


in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for My name's sake, not according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord."

But why should such a plea be the most influential one with God? At the first glance, a proposal to do for His name's sake, might seem to savor of selfishness. But, a moment's consideration, will place this matter in its true light. Selfishness consists not in setting a just estimate upon one's own interests, but in estimating them above their real value, and then, seeking them regardless of the rights and interests of others.

Does the proposal on God's part to act with primary reference to His own glory, or for His own name's sake, imply an overestimate of His own interests? Relatively, what interests are comparable with those that cluster about His name—the interests He represents, and is responsible for in the universe? Combine all the values that are represented by all finite intelligencies, and His glory would outweigh them all. Granting, as we most cheerfully do, that, in the aggregate, the interests of finite beings are of unspeakable worth to them: granting also, that some considerable effulgence may gather

about their names and history, yet, if they should perish out of the universe, the loss would not be near so serious, as would be any sensible diminution of the glory that belongs of right to God. Better that they should all perish, than that He should cease to be just what He is—"glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

It were almost a vain thing to attempt to comprehend what is involved in the glory of God. He, Himself, has called our attention to some portions of His creative work—The heavens declaring His glory, and the earth showing His handiwork—with the evident purpose of possessing our minds with some just idea of what His glory in its full splendor must be. Plucking from out the green meadow, as you go forth at the sunrising, a lily in full bloom, you hear One saying: "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Ah, then, what must the glory be of which this is but a faint reflection! "The earth is full of His glory," exclaims the Psalmist. And who has not, time and time again, out of a heart full of emotions awakened by some scene of magnificence in the world of sensible objects, endorsed the sentiment? 'Twere a sad thing to stand



helplessly by, while some grand painting of one of the old masters, was wrapped in devouring flames; but it would be a much sadder thing to see all the glorious landscape of which that painting is, at best, an imperfect copy, blotted out forever.

Conceding the possibility of such an event, what could be more dreadful than the obscuration of God's glory? Instantly, impenetrable night would settle down upon all created things. Clouds and darkness would be round about the throne. The music of heaven would cease. There would be no joy anywhere. The universe would become a vast tomb, wherein all the hopes of all sentient beings would lie buried. Nothing less than this could be, if God should cease to be the glorious Being which His works bespeak Him.

And yet, His *absolute* glory must far out-shine its reflected light. Can that then be selfishness in Him, which prompts Him to seek, first of all, the promotion of His own glory and the exaltation of His own name, seeing there is naught else of such vast moment to the universe? And this raises anew the question, whether in seeking His own glory, He must needs disregard the welfare of other beings?

To which we reply, that the happiness of every sentient being is bound up in the glory of God, human weal being advanced just in proportion to the promotion of His glory.

But the plea under consideration, appears to undergo a modification, which, though not affecting its substance, does change its form, because of the Person and mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, between whom and the Father there is so complete an identity, that whatever is to the praise, the honor, and the glory of the one is equally to the praise, the honor, and the glory of the other.


In the extreme urgency of man's fallen condition, Christ, the Son, interposes His sacred person, dies the ignominious death of the cross—dies, the just for the unjust, that He might reconcile them to God. How eminently fitting then, in those who are seeking good things to which they are not entitled of their own right, to ask in the name and for the sake of Christ, that He might be glorified; that He might experience the joy which was to be His recompense; that He might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. In view of His humiliation, and unexampled sufferings on man's behalf, surely no plea could be more appropriately

or effectively urged. The mention of His Son's name brings fresh to the mind of the Father, all the circumstances of the propitiatory sacrifice. And we may well believe, that "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will, with Him, also freely give us all things." Hence, Christ instructs us to ask in His name, declaring that whatsoever we ask of the Father in His name, will be given us, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. And thus we are brought back to the plea in its original form. So that, when we ask anything in the name of Christ, we are virtually asking for the glory of God, and for the honor of His name. It is all the same to Him, who would have "All men honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who hath sent Him." (John 5:23) We may, therefore, infer that the plea under consideration, modified as it is by the words of the Lord Jesus, offered intelligently, believingly, sincerely, and perseveringly, will be successful, and successful above all other pleas.

But note the qualifying terms, for they are essential to the integrity of the plea. God has not obligated Himself to answer every petition

that embodies the formula, "For Thy name's sake," or "For Christ's sake." For, the very petition which embraces either, or both these formulas, may have in the web of its arguments, urged strenuously, other considerations which have been of an absorbing character.

It must, therefore, be required that this plea be offered intelligently. The plea is also frequently used without fully believing in its efficacy. If expecting an answer to their petition, it is manifestly on other grounds. If not expecting an answer, surely the use of either formula can be only a pretense. A larger number, it is to be feared, use the plea insincerely. They are well aware—at least they might be—that while they are urging the glory of God, or the merits of His Son, as *the* reason why they should receive the blessing sought, they are really asking to gratify pride, ambition, or the love of ease, in the use to which they propose to put the blessing. In fact, they have no sincere and prevailing desire to glorify God. Still others, while using this plea sincerely, believingly, and intelligently, are not persistent in the use of it. They do not "cry day and night unto God." A *continual* coming does not attest their earnestness. They faint in prayer.





If they had but persevered—as they were instructed on the highest authority to do—in supplication, using this plea intelligently, believingly, sincerely, they might have prevailed.

It is therefore sufficiently manifest, why so many prayers remain unanswered. They are not wanting in precision. Possibly, they are not wanting in spasmodic earnestness. The things sought are greatly desired—are perhaps exceedingly desirable—and would be granted, if the motive of the petitioner were beyond question. He prays for the conversion of a child; but, as he prays, he thinks only of the comfort he himself would experience if he knew the child was saved beyond a peradventure; or he thinks of the happiness that will accrue to the child or of his unspeakable and eternal loss, should he die in his sins. And, surely, it is one of the most reasonable things in the world that he should be greatly moved by such considerations. It would not be strange, if his anxiety should become so intense, that he could neither rest himself, nor let God rest for his earnest crying to Him for the imperilled soul.


Should he fail to cry mightily and continuously he might well fear that the blood of the

child's soul would be found on his skirts.

But he has hardly raised the inquiry, whether the glory of God may not be involved in the answer to his petition, and if so to what extent. He is not at all concerned for the honor of His name, which, not unlikely has been named upon the child in the baptismal formula. Far be it from us, to underestimate the value of an immortal soul, or to intimate that the salvation of that soul is not a proper incentive to prayer. We should be less than human, if, in the case of a child, such an incentive should fail to lend intensity to our prayer. But, is it not of far greater importance, that no stain be allowed to rest upon the character of God, or upon His administration, than that a sinner should be left to suffer the penalty of the law he has violated?

In the answer to every petition, not only is the happiness of the individual at stake, but the interests of God's throne and the honor of His great name as well.

But, if the happiness of the individual and the glory of God lie in the same direction; if we can see how in any given case, the honor of His name is in any manner imperilled by the denial of our request; or, if we can see how in any



way His glory may be enhanced by a favorable response; then let us plead the one or the other as the consideration of greatest consequence. Let us fill our minds with the thought, that the glory of God is at stake—a thought that will increase wonderfully our boldness and importunity in supplication, enabling us like princes to prevail with God and with men.

When all other pleas have proved unsuccessful, this one may avail. We, who ask, may be ever so unworthy, we may be appalled by the magnitude and number of our offenses against God's law and grace. The person for whom we pray may be equally unworthy. We dare not ask for *our* sake or for *his* sake.

Such a prayer would avail little or nothing with a holy God. But we may pray with the Psalmist, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name, and deliver us, and purge away our sins for Thy name's sake."

5. In enforcing upon men the lesson He had been teaching, to the effect, "that men ought *always* to pray and not to faint," Christ spoke the parable of the importunate widow. The parable, which is in itself an object-lesson, teaches by a contrast, and an argument derived therefrom, which is cumulative in its force.

On the one hand is an unjust judge, and on the other, a just God. In the first instance the suppliant is a lone widow, and in the second God's own elect. The widow before the unjust judge had her discouragements, while God's own elect have their encouragements.

Beginning with the widow, we may take it for granted that she had a real grievance, and that in her appearance before the unjust judge she had the right on her side, and was seeking redress in the manner prescribed by law. "Avenge me," or give me justice, as against him who has wronged me, "my adversary." No alternative save this was left her; and she had an undoubted right, not only to a patient hearing, but to a decision in her favor. In the full conviction that her cause is just, she comes into court.

But there are many things to discourage.

(1) There is the consideration of *sex*—a matter of far greater moment at the East than among us, though there is with us nothing that a woman dreads more than the charge of unsexing herself. This natural delicacy of feeling the woman in question had to overcome, ere she could appear in court.

Not unlikely, there were those who thought

her course reprehensible, and who suggested that her very boldness would prejudice her cause in the estimation of the judge. He, at least, would have had no hesitation in hinting that she was out of her place.

(2) She was not only a woman, but a *widow*. And the state of widowhood at the East was, and is, one of exceeding desolation, none other being so exposed to all manner of oppressions.

She must have known how heavily she was handicapped by this consideration, and that it alone, would present a barrier to her success, well-nigh insurmountable. Before a prejudiced judge, the fact of her widowhood would more than offset any advantage she might have in the justice of her cause or in her ability to manage it skillfully.


(3) But, it is not at all improbable, that there was, in the person of her *adversary*, another serious impediment to her success. He may have been a man of large wealth and high social standing, whose influence with the judge was considerable.

At the least, the latter would have estimated with great carefulness the relative standing of the parties to this suit, before giving judgment in the widow's favor.

(4) Yet neither of the preceding considerations had in them, singly or combined, anything like the discouragement found in the well-known character of the judge. He had the reputation of being a thoroughly unprincipled man, entirely unfit to wear the ermine—a man, who, in the decisions he made, showed clearly that he neither feared God nor regarded man. Knowing in advance that such was the reputation of the man before whom she was to plead, a man who hesitated not to glory in his shame, it might have seemed to her, as it doubtless did to others, that she could hope for no favorable issue. And all her apprehensions were more than justified, when she came into the presence of the man, and read in the outlines of his face, and in his general bearing, the full confirmation of all that public rumor had alleged against him.

(5) And now that her turn has come for a hearing, another and sore, though not unexpected discouragement is added, in the prompt *rebuff* of the judge and his blunt refusal to grant her petition—"And he would not."

Whether he deigned to give a reason for the refusal does not appear. If he did, it would no doubt have been utterly vain to argue the matter




with him. For that sitting, at least, he was inexorable. And the widow withdrew, but with no faltering in her purpose. Though the discouragements are as many and the obstacles as great, or even greater, than they seemed at the first, yet she is determined to try again.

So, no sooner had the court been reopened on the following day, than, foremost among the crowd, appeared the widow, who repeats her demand for justice. What the judge may have said in his anger, or whether he declined to say anything, the result was the same. What now? The case was evidently a desperate one, and must be met by a remedy equally desperate. So she determines in her mind, despite all the obstacles, and regardless alike of the discouragements presented in her sex, her widowhood, the standing of her adversary, the reputation and character of the judge, the repulse she had already met at his hands, and his positive refusal to give judgment in her favor, to continue her applications, relaxing nothing of her earnestness and importunity. In the fulfilment of her purpose, day by day, no sooner had the judge taken his seat upon the bench, than he encountered the gaze of this resolute woman. The rebuffs, the insults, the curses he heaps

upon her, seem to make no impression. The more disinclined he is to grant her petition, the more determined she is not to be denied. He has, at length, found more than his match. He is annoyed beyond measure at the woman's persistency, but sees no way of escape except by granting her petition. He is exceedingly reluctant to do this, yet there is no alternative. And so, at length, after assuring himself that he is acting in perfect consistency with his past fame, saying in soliloquy: "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet,"—from a purely selfish motive—"because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she weary me."

Thus, tardily, reluctantly, ungraciously, he grants the boon, which, once and again, he had refused. What no reverence for God and regard for man would have prompted him to do, a woman's prayer, renewed day after day, wrung from him. She has succeeded, triumphing over all obstacles, in winning her suit at a tribunal where injustice reckoned on its spoilings as a certainty, and needed scarcely to plead its own cause, so thoroughly had it suborned the judge. Hence, it was no ordinary conquest which this poor, lone, friendless woman had achieved.





Difficulties, instead of crushing her spirit, only stimulated its energies. Disappointments, instead of cooling her ardor, only fired it the more.

We now pass to the contrast presented to the unjust judge and the poor widow, in the just God, to whom all petitions for good things should be addressed, and "His own elect," with the encouragements they have to pray always and without fainting, and the success which is certain to wait on their petitions, if they do but persevere in offering them. The argument in antithesis is stated by Christ in these words: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, and He is longsuffering with them? I say unto you, He will avenge them speedily."

(a) We commence with the revealed fact that God is *no respecter of persons*. In giving audience to His creatures, He knows neither male nor female, bond nor free, fortunate nor unfortunate. Least of all is He disposed to discriminate against those who, for any cause, are lightly esteemed among men—the weaker vessels, the more helpless ones, the sons and daughters of affliction, the children of want and woe. It is no reason with Him, why He should not regard with favor a petition, that the suppliant is a

person of no influence in the world; a poor lone widow, perchance, whose cause no one is ready to espouse. In His presence-chamber, there are no sneers for the lowly. They have the same rights there with the high-born and respectable. And God would as soon, possibly a little sooner, avenge them than others whose case is presumed to be less urgent.

It seems as if this fact was one exactly fitted to encourage those who, for any cause, are regarded as persons of small influence, and who naturally shrink from observation and allow their personal responsibility, in the matter of prayer, to be merged into that of the mass of believers. There is no reason why they should not be found occupying the front rank among the suppliants for spiritual and other favors; no reason why they should not press their suit before the mercy seat.

(b) The second fact worthy of special note, is, that those who are the suppliants at God's throne of grace are His chosen friends—"His own elect"—whose cause He is pledged to espouse, whose adversaries are His adversaries. It is plain then, that His elect must occupy high vantage-ground. They have the ear of God in preference to their adversaries. The attempt to

prejudice their cause in His estimation, must signally fail. They shall have a full and fair hearing, and the answer to their petition will be as prompt as the case admits of. While there is no unseemly haste, there will be no unnecessary delay.

How distinct an encouragement to importunate prayer does this fact afford. How great the contrast, in this particular, between them and the widow whose relations to the unjust judge were utterly repellant. Surely, if she was not discouraged by the barriers between her and success, God's own elect ought to take heart.

(c) A third fact full of encouragement to the suppliant at His mercy-seat, is *the known character of God*.

There is the most abundant encouragement in drawing near to such a Being, and making known our request to Him. There is in His character a presumption, that the suppliant for any favor, will meet with no rebuff. He will be treated compassionately, even though the boon sought cannot be consistently bestowed, or can be bestowed only after long delay.

Surely, then, if the widow in her suit before the unjust judge was not disheartened by what was rumored of him, and what was confirmed

by her own observations, but courageously plead her cause before him, God's own elect should not think of faltering in their approaches to His throne of grace, and into a presence which, though august, is yet full of benignity, and tenderness.

(d) Another fact too important to be overlooked in this contrast: whereas, the widow in importuning the unjust judge, seems to have had no helper to second her efforts, God's own elect have the aid of One who has no peer in this department; who, when they know not what they should pray for as they ought, "helpeth their infirmities, and maketh intercession for them," not in the imperfect utterances of human speech, but "with groanings which cannot be uttered;" and in such form, with such considerations added to the original petition, and such links supplied in the argument as He, knowing the mind of God, as also the exigencies of the suppliant, is able to supply, so rendering the plea all the more powerfully persuasive.

(e) Still another fact remains to render the climax complete, and leave nothing wanting to encourage those who pray; and that is the actual experience of those who have made known their requests unto God—the respect shown to their

will depend upon their continual coming to Him—their crying day and night.

Many are the praying ones, who, fainting in prayer, have ceased their supplications at the very juncture when importunity would have won the day and secured the blessing.

6. Instead of a lesson in parable, we come now to a real incident in the life of Christ, that illustrates and enforces what He had taught respecting the importance of persistency or importunity in prayer. The case is that of the Syrophœnician woman who came to Him in behalf of her daughter. This woman also encountered difficulties which she bravely and shrewdly overcame, one by one, winning Christ's emphatic approval, who exclaimed: "Oh woman, great is thy faith!"

In the plea for her daughter, "grievously vexed with a devil," she had so thoroughly identified herself with her child in the latter's experience of suffering, that she asks for mercy, as for herself: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David." She had come far, even out of the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, to make this appeal; but,

(1) Is met by the *seeming indifference* of the person from whom she expected the boon

so earnestly desired. The very Christ of whose compassion and wonder-working power she had heard so much in her own country, and on whose ready sympathy and prompt interposition, she had reckoned so surely, seemed utterly oblivious to her agonizing appeal, for *He answered her not a word.*

The surprise, not to say shock, this must have caused the woman, the utter disappointment that carried back its sickening sensation to her weary and sorrow-stricken heart we can imagine, as she found herself apparently unnoticed by the great Healer of human maladies. What could His silence betoken save utter disregard of the person of the suppliant and of her petition? We do not intimate, of course, that this would have been a just inference; but, under the circumstances, it would have been a very natural one, borne out by appearances.

(2) A new difficulty presented itself in the reception she met at the hands of the disciples. They were evidently annoyed by her presence, and more by the urgency of her entreaties; for, most likely, she had sought to press them into her service, beseeching them to use, in her behalf, their influence with the Master. And she saw how reluctant they were to interfere in the

matter; and, also, when they could no longer endure the vexation of her appeals, she heard their cold words as they besought Christ to "send her away," with her petition granted if He would, but at all events, to send her away, "for she crieth after us." She may have thought within herself, if this is the spirit which a long and intimate association with the Master has bred in the disciples—if no higher motive actuates Him than impels them, I can hope for nothing. But, if they misrepresent Him, and He is really under the influence of higher and holier motives, then, in my anxiety to engage the disciples in my service, I have overreached myself. The evident offense I have given them may prove an affront to the Master, and may so far excite His displeasure, that, for their sake, He will send me away un-blessed.

But, in any aspect of the case, she could have seen nothing but discouragement in the attitude of the disciples. If the *silence* of Christ was a damper to her hope, the *selfishness* of His disciples bade fair to extinguish it altogether.

(3) But the end is not yet—a still greater obstacle presents itself in Christ's reply: "*I am*

*not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,*" which was understood to mean, that His ministry was limited to the boundaries of Judea, or to the Israelitish race. He Himself had never as yet gone out of Palestine, and was even now not beyond the boundary line. Why should He exceed the exact limits of His commission? I am not sent *but* unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now the manifest construction which these words required, would have been enough utterly to dishearten most persons in the position occupied by this woman. It seemed like a deliberate closing of the doors against her. The disciples, doubtless, so understood it. But the woman *did* not, or, *would* not take the hint designed for her, and so, she is doomed to meet another disappointment of more formidable proportions.

In the agony of her desire, as the case grew desperate, she had cast herself at Christ's feet, and with violence of manner, and words of passionate appeal, besought Him once more to help her.

(4) And is met by the reply—a reply in the form of an expression common among the Hebrews, and full of taunting contempt as it fell from the lips of the ordinary Jew—"It is



not *meet* to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs."

Although, in the mouth of Christ the edge of scorn was taken off by the use of the diminutive "little dogs"; and though, in His look and tone, it was easy to discover His own lack of accord with the narrowness of the sentiment, yet, as the words fell on the ear of that agonized woman, they conveyed a meaning full of discomfort. For they brought vividly before her mind facts with which she had long been familiar, relating to the exclusive privileges of the Israelitish nation, and of the strict injunction laid upon them to separate themselves from the idolatrous peoples surrounding them; and how should she know that the law of separation was not still in force, and that Christ was not restrained in His compassion by His fealty thereto?


What right, surely, had He to "take the children's bread," and give it unto such as she, thus violating the organic law of the national life? The flashing of the inference that was in some sort a justification of the words which fell upon the ear, had no tendency to relieve the mental distress as they sank like lead in her heart. And now the trial has reached its utmost

limit, short of an absolute refusal on the part of Christ to grant her request, which entered not into His plan. The end He sought has been already attained, in bringing out the wonderful faith of this woman, whose triumphing over difficulties now demands special consideration.

Let us trace up that triumph, going back to the commencement of the trial and following her through a succession of victories.

(a) Her first victory was won over the apparent indifference of Christ. However severe the shock this outward seeming may have caused her at the outset, it evidently had no power to discourage her.

She may have, with "the keen instinct of a sorrowful spirit," detected at the very first the tenderness of heart hid away under an assumed disregard of her petition. Christ had not the look of a *hard* man. The benignity of His countenance shone out, notwithstanding He had covered Himself with the veil of a constrained silence. And then, it could not be that there was no truth in all the reports she had heard of His kindness and compassion for all classes of afflicted ones. She will draw no hasty inferences prejudicial to her chances of ultimate success.



(b) And the cold selfishness of the disciples—the unchivalrousness of their conduct, however vexatious, she suffers not to divert her from her purpose. She had encountered such selfishness before; and though surprised to find it in such close association with One who, as it was reported to her, would not “break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax,” yet it should not extinguish her hope. She would not believe that the Master could dismiss her from His presence just to save His disciples from her importunity. She was willing to spare them a scene, and would utterly cease crying after them. She would make her supplication direct to the Master.

(c) But what effect will Christ's words have upon her? Is not her faith staggered by His reply, aside to the disciples: “I am not *sent*, save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”? Is it possible, that out of such words she can gather aught to supply the waste of courage they would naturally have wrought? Does she not see the door closing against her? What is it that she senses in those words that is hid from others? Has she discovered under a seeming severity, “a lurking of secret love?” Does some hidden supply of oil feed the flame of faith

that just in proportion as her case waxes desperate, her courage rises higher and higher?

Perhaps, she said within herself, "If He is not *sent* save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, then indeed, is He not sent to me. But why should this fact hinder my *coming* to Him? I have not asked Him to pass the boundaries of His own land to confer the favor I seek. He has not been sent to *me*, but I have been sent to *Him*, and *upon the field of His own ministry, I have found Him.*"

Or, possibly, it was the very desperation of her case, her dire extremity, that lent such indomitable energy to her soul, and emboldened her to take her cause into her own hands. "Hitherto she has been crying after the Lord from a *distance*," but now, instead of being put further still by His words, she came near and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me! She shrewdly reasoned, that it would go very much against the grain of His disposition, as well as against the general tenor of His past life, to thrust her away from His very feet. It was no small victory she had won in thus securing a position so near His sacred person. But though she has gained so much, she has not gained all.

(d) Constrained by her bold advances,

Christ breaks the silence He has hitherto maintained toward her. But what an onset upon her faith do His words make! "It is not *meet* to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs."

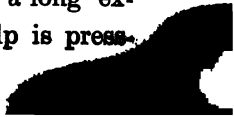
This, you will say, will overwhelm her. And no doubt such would have been the result, had her faith been only of the average strength. But she, as another has well expressed it, "from the very word which seemed to make most against her, with the ready wit of faith, drew an argument in her own favor." "Truth Lord," I am, indeed, but a dog, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table," or, "the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." I admit, I have none of the rights of children, and I claim none of them. But, the dogs have their place under the table, where it is allowed them to eat of the crumbs that are the dogs' portion. Surely, if I am content to occupy the dogs' lowly estate, Thou wilt not deny me the poor privilege of that estate—the privilege of the crumbs, which is all I am asking: give me but the dogs' portion, and I will go away supremely happy."

And thus it was, that she won a double victory—first, over that natural pride of heart which would have raised her to her feet, with

eyes flashing indignation and tongue armed with bitter retort, "No! I am not a dog, and will not be treated like one"; and second, in getting the best of the argument, so snatching victory out of seeming defeat.

And now Christ Himself proclaims her victory: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Noble triumph, worthily achieved, and fittingly rewarded, is the judgment of mankind.

Difficulties, similar to those encountered by the Syrophœnician woman, present themselves more or less frequently, to all who are accustomed to pray. Oftentimes, it seems as if Christ was indifferent to their prayers, for they get no immediate answer. There is no indication that they have made any impression upon Him. It does not indeed follow, that He has not heard and is not intending to answer. That would be wholly unlike Him. But, for some reason best known to Himself, He has not as yet answered a word. This is doubtless very trying to the faith of those whose acquaintance with Christ is of but recent date. And, indeed, it may try sorely some who have had a long experience, if so be their need of help is press-



ingly urgent. Yet the example of faith we have been considering, encourages them to hold on.

"For, though He may a while forbear,  
He'll help them from on high."

Ere long, He will break the silence, if they do but persevere in their entreaties.

It often happens, too, that the disciples by their strange conduct, try the faith of those who pray. They seem so cold-hearted, and so reluctant to lend a helping hand. They are so unwilling to bear others' burdens to a throne of grace; or, they exhibit so much of impatience with those who bespeak their intercessions, and are so evidently in haste to rid themselves of their importunity, that they seem really to hinder more than they help.

So, also, more generally, "the narrow prejudices, the bitter sectarianism, the hollow sanctity, the gloomy grimace," often discovered in those who profess to be devoted to Christ, is a very great embarrassment to such as are struggling to obtain some favor from the Master. But the bad conduct of the disciples should no more discourage them than it did the woman from out the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. They may be sure that their cold selfishness is not

the result of Christ's instructions. He has nothing but rebukes for such selfishness. And He will answer prayer all the same as if this obstruction had not been interposed.

Sometimes, too, "the apparent restrictedness of divine grace" operates as a hindrance to the earnest seeker. Having heard of a limited atonement, or of a doctrine of election, or foreordination, or special calling which has some seeming support in the inspired volume, he begins to question within himself, whether he is embraced among those for whom the blessings of the Gospel were intended, and so has a right to pray. But surely, he ought to take heart after considering the case of the aforesaid woman. Of one thing he may be very sure, that if Christ was not sent especially to him, he may, nevertheless, come to Christ.

Sometimes, too, it may seem that the very classification Christ makes of the suppliant—the *view* He gives him, by the Spirit, of his own unworthiness, causing him to feel and to confess that he is the very chief of sinners, and therefore entitled to nothing—should turn him away from the mercy seat. But, let him be encouraged by the example of one, who, though classed with "the dogs under the table," yet was



all the more bold in pressing her suit, and the more successful in winning it.


7. In the matter of prayer for the sick, there is nothing of inspired authority more explicit than what is found written in the Epistle of James, (5: 14, 15), where particular directions are given as to the mode of procedure. As there has been, especially in more recent times, much speculating and experimenting on this line, it seems desirable that we should go back to the original authorization of the prayer-cure and see what it contains. A clear exposition of the apostle's words is all the case requires.

"Is any sick among you?" Of course, it is assumed that there will be sick ones among the disciples of Christ, and that, in many cases, the sickness will, in spite of all means used, prove to be unto death. But, while the issue is still uncertain, what shall be done in any case of sickness, beyond the ordinary?

First—*Let him call for the elders of the Church.* Who these elders were in the primitive Church, and what their office, is not so clear. Some think they performed functions similar to those of the eldership in some of our modern church organizations; while others hold, that the elders in the early Church were the

associated pastors of the Church in any given locality—in large cities for instance, like Corinth and Jerusalem—where the convenience of the worshippers required separate places of assembly, each having a separate pastor, styled an elder—without affecting in any way, the unity of the Church itself in that locality. This plausible view of the matter, would account for the summoning of these men for a sick-room service, where prayer extraordinary was to be offered. It was to be presumed that the men set over the various Christian congregations for the ministry of the Word and for conducting the the service of prayer, would be better qualified than the average disciple for this special service. They ought to have been, and they doubtless generally were, men gifted not only in prayer, but eminent in other respects; such men, for example, as were the seven deacons chosen and set apart by ordination for the service of the Jerusalem Church—"men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."

But, why call for the *elders*? Would not one elder serve the purpose quite as well or better, supposing him to have, in an eminent degree, the aforesaid qualifications? Doubtless, the apostle was mindful of the words of the



the Lord Jesus in respect to the matter of agreement in prayer—"If two of you shall *agree* on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven," and he would have the disciples conform, as nearly as possible, to all the conditions of any given promise. The better the men composing the eldership of the Church, the more anxious they would be to keep strictly within the line of their instructions in the service of prayer.

A possible disagreement between two or more men, eminent for their wisdom, spiritual discernment, and experience of a divine guidance in the matter and manner of prayer, would make all the difference possible as to the result.

*And let them pray over him*, with such an understanding of the case as would enable them intelligently to present it before the Father in heaven, with the reasons why He should graciously interpose in behalf of the sick.

But this was not all: in connection with their prayer, there was to be an *anointing of the sick with oil*, either before or after the prayer, or while the prayer was being offered. At that period, in oriental countries, the anointing with

oil was one of the principal and most commonly approved remedies for disease. Whatever its efficacy in ordinary cases might have been, it nevertheless stood for the whole *materia medica* of those days. To use it in case of sickness was to employ the means prescribed by the medical practitioner for the healing of disease. The elders called in for the service of prayer, well understood that they were not at liberty to dispense with its use, or to speak disparagingly of that use. They were not there as usurpers of the functions of the regular medical practitioner, neither were they there to interfere with his practice. They were rather to pray for his endowment with wisdom in making his prescriptions, and for the efficacy of the same. The anointing with oil, certainly a harmless thing in itself, was not designed to supersede the practice of the healing art; but it was a sign of something far above all human skill in the treatment of various maladies, even the wisdom and power of Him "who healeth all our diseases," directing as to the means used for that purpose and the agency employed in using them.

Wherefore, and most significantly, it is added: *In the name of the Lord.* It was to be dis-

tinctly understood, that for all skill in prescribing the proper remedy, and for the saving results of its administration, these elders of the church would recognize their dependence on God. If, in any case, prayer should prove effective, it would be because those who prayed believed in that which His name stood for.

And was there any doubt as to the issue? Provided the aforesaid conditions were all fulfilled, would not the sick be recovered? That would depend. *The prayer of faith shall save the sick.*

There is a possibility, that two, or three, or more elders of the Church, men of the highest repute—men full of faith and the Holy Ghost—may in some instances, not be able to offer that prayer. And why? Simply because the prayer of faith cannot be offered in *all* cases. It is not in accordance with the will of God, that every sick person should be recovered. Possibly, the prayer of faith is not offered for the sick in one case out of ten, if in one out of a hundred, and that through no fault of those who pray. "It is appointed unto men once to die," and that appointment in some supposed case must be allowed to stand, though any number of elders of the Church should be called to

pray and to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. Moreover, it cannot be known in advance, whether the prayer of faith can be offered. That is to be determined, ordinarily, if not always, *while* the prayer service is in progress, by those engaged therein. And how shall they know? Except as they are taught of God, they do not and cannot know, not even when they think they know, and proclaim, with the utmost assurance, the forth-coming cure of the sick one for whom they have prayed. Eager then we all are to know what the prayer of faith is, as distinguishable from other prayers, acceptable prayers, that are being constantly answered.

But how is it possible, even for one who has at some time offered that prayer, to reveal to another its distinguishing characteristics, so that if at any time he should offer that prayer, he will be able to recognize it? Perhaps it is impossible. And yet, some things may certainly be predicated of it:

(1) It must be *definite* as to object. It cannot be a scattering prayer, neither can it be an omnium-gatherum. It cannot possibly be one out of a score or more of petitions for things desired and desirable. The case in hand is an

urgent, pressing one, and must for the time being command the absorbed and exclusive attention of the petitioner. It separates the one thing sought from all others.

(2) It must needs be *intense*. The case is, perhaps, *in extremis*, it is a matter of life and death; and, unless God interposes, the sickness is almost certain to be fatal. The symptoms are all unfavorable. The physician emphasizes the urgency of the case. He says, if help comes at all, it must come now, or it will come too late. All other means have been tried in vain, and prayer to God is the last resort. Unless the elders—the men who have been called to conduct this service—throw their whole souls into it, their prayer would be only a beating of the air.

(3) It is accompanied with the highest type of *argument*, *i. e.*, argument free from selfish considerations—argument in which the basis of the plea is the glory of God, than which, as we have seen, there can be nothing higher or more forceful.

(4) It must be *persevering*—a prayer that, if necessary, will be continued day and night, without fainting.

(5) It must be *expectant*—like the prayer

offered by Elijah for rain on the top of Carmel. The sound of abundance of rain, had been heard by none save himself, and that sound must materialize before he changed from his praying posture before God; and he was on the lookout for some sure token on the far-off horizon, using his servant's eyes, as he went, to and fro, from the highest point of observation. Again and again came the answer, "There is nothing." "But there *must* be something—go again, and keep on going, until you see a token: look toward the sea." Meanwhile, unmoved by appearances, he kept on praying, growing more earnest, we may believe, as one unfavorable report followed another, until, at length, "a little cloud no larger than a man's hand, rising out of the sea," was discovered. That was it. And now for a race down the mountain side and over the plain, on foot by the prophet, and in chariot by the king, lest the rain should stop them ere they reached a shelter.

Having said so much, it yet remains to be said, that the *kernel* of the matter—the real secret of the prayer of faith—has not been disclosed, simply because it is *incommunicable*.

Even those who have offered the prayer once and again, might not recognize its fea-



tures when they offered it the third time. It may be that there is in their case, the same peril of being exalted above measure by the revelations that there was in Paul's, to whom was given "a thorn in the flesh."

## THE LAST THINGS

1. The Speaking Dead
2. The Dying
3. The Resurrection
4. The Lamb's Book of Life
5. The Servants that Serve
6. The Spirits Perfected
7. The Privileged Hereafter



## VII

### THE LAST THINGS

Under the title of "The Last Things," the reader will not anticipate a discussion of *all* such things as are the subjects of divine revelation, saying nothing of those that are left to conjecture. No attempt will be made to fathom the unknown, or to discover "Secret things which belong unto the Lord our God"—things which He has not seen fit to reveal to us or to our children.

The seven *last* things to which our attention will be directed, might be regarded as incidental revealings; but on that account may not be less worthy of our consideration.

Some of these are valuable as side-lights on the scheme of ransom, when it reaches its final and glorious culmination in the hereafter.

1. Our relations are necessarily with two worlds, and they are such that death cannot possibly end all for either.

Not only will our status in the next world be determined by what we are and what we do in

this, but after we have gone hence, there will be left behind a residuum of influence for which there must be a strict accounting.

And happy would we be, if we were assured that that residuum would be only "the survival of the fittest."

Abel has been dead near six thousand years, and during all those years he has continued speaking, and will never cease speaking to the end of time—speaking to an ever increasing multitude.

But, of all he has spoken during sixty centuries, not one uttered word is upon record. It was an *act*, pleasing to God, useful to man, and honorable to himself, that has done the speaking. "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it—by the whole transaction—he being dead yet speaketh.*"

Taking a firstling of the flock and of the fat thereof, he brought an offering unto the Lord. Though a keeper of sheep, we may presume his offering was not the suggestion of economy, or convenience, but an expression of his own personal belief in the provision God had made for the forgiveness of sin, through an atoning sac-

rifice, of which a lamb slain was the prescribed type.

The act was memorable in itself, but it was rendered yet more significant by what followed. It inaugurated the great conflict between faith and skepticism which has been going on in our world ever since; a conflict in which the most decided hostility has been evinced toward those who have believed in, and exalted the person and work of a suffering and dying Redeemer—The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. As an impressive confession of his faith, the act of Abel has never lost its significance. The sealing of that confession with his own blood, advanced both the man and his confession into the foreground of sacred story.

But others beside Abel have continued speaking after they were dead. Indeed, to some extent, all men, good and bad, continue thus to speak. By their words and their works, by what they have believed and taught, by what they have dared and suffered, they have continued speaking long after death.

The fact is one of intensest interest, and may well engage the attention of all who are making up their record for the judgment day.

The *words* spoken or written by many a man

while living, survive him in the memory of those who heard or read and were impressed for good or for evil. They may survive in the literature of the language in which he spake or wrote. They may survive in the literature of other languages than his own. Moses in the Pentateuch, David in the Psalms, Solomon in the Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel in the Prophecies, the Apostles in the Gospels and the Epistles, each in his own peculiar style, has been speaking century after century. Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, Milton in his *Paradise Lost*, Shakespeare in his Plays, each in his own characteristic way are addressing vast audiences, and will continue to do so in the literature of all languages until time shall be no more.

The author of a certain hymn that is sung and will continue to be sung for centuries by millions on millions of devout worshippers, will be speaking through that hymn, when every other memento of his name and fame shall have perished from the memory of mankind. Centuries after the death of Jonadab, the words, spoken in solemn charge to his sons, were quoted by his descendants in justification of their refusal to drink wine. And so Jonadab spoke to the men living a thousand years after his de-

cease—nay, is speaking still, at a remove of more than three times that number of years.

The *deeds* of men, or what they have wrought for the glory of God and the weal of the human race while living, will be speaking for them after they have gone hence. “The works that I do,” said Christ, “they bear witness of me,” and that witness can never cease, or become indistinct, so long as the record of the works continues to be the study of mankind.

The same is true of the works of all men, especially works of which Christianity has been the inspiration. The works of the world’s most famous musical composers—Bach, Handel, Hayden, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn—drew their most effective subjects from Old Testament stories, or incidents in the life of Christ.

The same may be said of the works of the great masters in painting and sculpture. Raphael in *The Transfiguration*; Rubens in his *Descent from the Cross*; Thorwaldsen in his *Christ and The Apostles*—one and all of these great artists are yet speaking, to ever increasing audiences—speaking not only through the splendid originals, but through the unnumbered copies, which, with the aid of modern art, even the poorest among the people may suspend upon the



walls of his cottage, and contemplate with delight, while princes sit in mute admiration before the originals. The copy, which is the veriest daub, has, nevertheless, a voice with which to teach the object-lesson which was in the mind of the master. Dorcas of Joppa, famed while living for her "good works and alms-deeds," spoke, after she was dead, through the coats and garments shown by the widows, the objects of her beneficence, who stood weeping by her bier. This industrious needle-woman is still speaking, not only through the apostolic record of what she did, but through the every-day record of what ten thousand other Christian women are doing, partly, we may believe, through the incitement of her noble example. The woman of Bethany, who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment and poured the contents on her Lord, continues to speak. And "wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached," we have Christ's own assurance that the good work wrought upon Him by this woman shall be "told for a memorial of her."

Mary Lyon, through the institution she founded in prayers and tears and self-denials, even though it should at some future period cease to be conducted in accordance with her views, will continue speaking long after the

generation that knew her shall have passed away. She will speak through the lives of hundreds of women that were moulded through her influence. Deacon Otis will speak, and speak most effectively so long as the world stands, through his million-dollar bequest to the American Board. And to what a vast audience will he be speaking! Never, while living, did his voice reach a hundredth part as many hearers, as it does now that he is dead, and his works follow him.

The deeds of our Revolutionary sires, and of those who shed their blood to preserve the government they founded from disruption, voice the sentiments of loyalty to their country and her institutions, which they entertained while living. From many a marble shaft, all over this fair land, the dead speak to the living. As we pass by with uncovered heads, our hearts thrill at the recollection of their heroic deeds, as much as if the silence should be broken by voices out of the sepulchre. The speech of no survivor impresses us, as does the silent marble that marks the resting place of his dead compatriot. Who that hath ears to hear, could walk through the cemeteries at Arlington or Andersonville, where the headstones of the sleeping host,

column after column stretch far away, and fail to hear, running along the ground, a murmur of the hushed voices of those who had not counted their lives dear unto them, that they might vindicate their country's righteous cause. As the deed of the three hundred heroes, who performed such feats of valor at the Pass of Thermopylæ, has been speaking for them through all the centuries, so will the deed of these soldier boys speak for them while the country saved by their valor has a history to record.

The impress of a man's *example*—the influence which has gone out from his life, that has given shape, tone, character; that has, in a word, moulded other lives—speaks for him after he is dead. Very many of our best men have testified that they owed, under God, everything to their mother. The silently constraining influence of her well-ordered life within the sacred precincts of the home circle, how it tells for the future of every member of the household! How the fragrance of such a life distils like the dew. What an heirloom it is for the generations that are to follow. Of an eminent jurist, recently deceased, whose memoir has appeared, one of our Reviews says: "He derived from his mother strong Christian principles, and the basis of his

belief remained the same from youth upwards. He examined the evidences of Christianity with the logical scrutiny of a lawyer, and found them beyond cavil."

A king among his subjects, a pastor among his flock, a teacher among his pupils, a Christian among his brethren, are each leaving an impress upon other lives, and through that impress, each one will certainly be speaking after death. The persons whose character he has helped to mould, whether for good or for evil, will be his mouthpiece to the living. We see then, it is not and cannot be true, that when a man dies that is the end of him. It could not be, even if he himself were annihilated at death. If his existence were to cease then, he would still live in the affairs of this present world; live in every wave of influence set in motion by him; live in every character he had helped to mould; live in all the works of his hands which survive him.

Moreover, a man must be held to as strict an account for what he speaks after he is dead, as for what he speaks while he lives. Many a man might well wish it could be otherwise. He dreads to be held to such an accountability. Frequently, he would be glad to recall the words

he has spoken, almost as soon as they have been uttered. He hopes the impression produced by them will not be lasting. He would stay the evil influence from spreading. But, to think that all which goes out from him, through word or deed, is to be speaking for him after he is dead, and can no longer influence the result; to think that the vast accumulation of evil must be charged to his account; to think that the careless word, the passionate word, the foul word, the skeptical word, the blasphemous word, has gone beyond recall, would naturally excite a fervent wish, that death might be the end of him. But, it is supremely *fit*, that the accountability should keep pace with the consequences of all his words and deeds.

If accountable for what we shall be speaking after death, as a continuation of what we are now speaking, then, surely, we cannot be too careful of what goes out from us in the nature of influence. Let us evermore speak and do the things that we could earnestly wish might continue to speak for us after we are dead, the influence of which we will not be ashamed to meet at any remove from the living present.

How vain must be the attempt to make a man speak after his death what he did not, and

would not speak while he was living. When a man dies we naturally and necessarily think of him as he was when living. We think of what he said and did. We think of the views he held, and taught. And whatever the pressure brought to bear upon us, to change the record he has made for himself while living, we cannot do it. If we falsify the record in obituaries, or on the tombstone, we only stultify ourselves. We convince nobody, not even ourselves. The dead man, speaking from his coffin and shroud, might well rebuke the perfidy of those who, in making up a posthumous estimate of character, go in face of the array of evidence which every one may read for himself out of the open volume of personal history.

2. A physician of large and successful practice, and withal a professed disciple of Christ, once said to the author: "I have no fear of *death*, but my fear is of what is *after* death." And that is, doubtless, the status of very many of the disciples—a status that ought to be changed if full credit be given to all Christ taught respecting the estate of believers after death. It was, doubtless, His purpose to deliver them, who through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Why this purpose should,

in so many cases, remain unfulfilled, demands the most serious consideration. Whether the fear that genders the bondage, relates to the article of death itself, or to what is after death, it ought to be dissipated in every case of true discipleship. If, in any instance, the evidence of discipleship were lacking, there might be good reason for fearing what is after death; but, assuming that there is no lack, what reasonable ground is there for fear? If the word of Christ is of any account, then there is a distinct pledge of blessedness after death for every believer, and that not on the ground of his own worthiness, but of his faith in the worthiness of Him who "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Christ is not taken at His word as it respects the future. In such a case, the remedy must surely be found in a faith that increases until wavering has given place to assurance.

If, on the other hand, the fear of death in a disciple, is the result of misapprehension as to certain phenomena in the experience of those who are dying, or are supposed to be dying, then some instruction may bring relief; and for this instruction, the author cheerfully defers to the wisdom of those whose close observation

and discriminating judgment are entitled to confidence.

A writer\* in a review several years since declared, that "the act of dying was ascertained to be absolutely free from suffering, insensibility always preceding it. Thousands who have recovered after hope had been surrendered have so witnessed."

The probability is, that most persons suffer far more physical pain at different periods of their life, than they do in the article of death.

"Sudden and violent death, shocking to the senses, may not be, probably is not, painful to the victim. Drowning, hanging, freezing, shooting, falling from a height, poisoning of many kinds, beget stupor or numbness of the nerves, which is incompatible with sensation.

"Death from fire dismays us; we can scarcely conceive aught more distressing. Fire probably causes suffocation from smoke, or insensibility from inhaling flame, so that the agony we imagine is not felt. They who have been near their end have experienced more pain on returning, so to speak, from their grave, than if they had gone to it. They have endured all the

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\*Julius Henri Browne in "The Forum,"




pangs corporeal and mental of death, without actual dying. It is an error, therefore, to suppose that men may not have tasted the bitterness of death, and yet be alive and in good health. . . . Fear of death is often confounded with desire to live, two radically diverse feelings. 'I do not want to die,' has a very different meaning from 'I dread to die.' Attachment to life while one is in health, useful, having objects to attain, with influence and friends, is natural, and in consonance with law. But is not attachment to life for life's sake only, when old age has come, and vigor and helpfulness have gone, and our future is behind us, unnatural? Such attachment denotes dread of death, since life at that period can scarcely retain any of its old charm or compensation."

As to certain *phenomena* in the experience of those who are dying, or are supposed to be dying, Dr. David Nelson, to whom reference was made earlier in this volume, bears this remarkable testimony: "During twenty years of observation, I found the state of the soul belonging to the dying, uniformly and materially unlike that of those who only supposed themselves dying.

There was a man who believed himself con-

verted. His friends, judging from his walk, hoped with him. He was seized with disease and believed himself dying. . . He felt no joy. His mind was dark, his soul clouded. His exercises were painful and the opposite of every enjoyment. He was not dying. He recovered. He had not been in the death-stream. After this he was taken again. He believed himself dying, and he was. All was peace, serenity, hope, triumph."

"I was called to see a female, who departed under an influence which causes the patient to faint again and again, more and still more profoundly, until life is extinct. When recovered from the first condition of swooning she appeared as unconscious or as destitute of mental activity as others usually do. She sank again and revived: it was still the same. She fainted more profoundly, and when awake again, appeared as one who has had thoughts he cannot recall. At length she appeared entirely gone. The struggle seemed ended. Her weeping relatives clasped their hands, exclaiming, 'She is dead.' But, unexpectedly, she waked once more, and glancing her eyes on one that sat near her, said, 'Oh, I was at an entirely new place!' and then sank to remain insensible to




the things of the place we live in. Why she like others in fainting, should have no thoughts which she could recall when not so near death as she afterward was when she had thoughts, and why her greatest activity of mind appeared to happen during her nearest approach to the future world, and whilst so near that stage from which scarcely any ever return who once reach it, seemed somewhat perplexing. Can it be possible, that we can stand so precisely on the dividing line, that the gale from both this and the coming world may blow upon our cheek? Can we have a taste of the exercises of the next territory before we enter it?

“ I have seen those depart who were naturally timid, who expected to meet death with fright and alarm. I have heard such sing long before Jordan was half forded. I have seen faces, where, pallid as they were, I beheld more celestial triumph, than I have ever witnessed anywhere else. In that voice there was a sweetness, and in that eye a glory, which I never could have fancied in the death spasms, if I had not been near. The condition of the soul, when the death-stream is entered, is not the same with that which it becomes when it is almost passed. The Christian who goes down the

ladder into the dark ravine, pale and disconsolate, oftentimes starts with exultation, and tries to burst into a song, when almost over. Would you naturally expect that the increase of the death-chill would add to the dying man's happiness? Would you suppose, that as his eyesight fails, and his hearing becomes confused, and his breathing convulsed, and he sinks into that cold, fainting, sickening condition of pallid death, his exultation would begin? It does then begin with some. Then is the time when many who enter the dark valley, see something that transports. But some are too low to tell of it, and their friends think they departed under a cloud, when they really did not."

How blessed the assurance, that "Christ became a partaker of flesh and blood, that through death—His own death—He might destroy him who hath the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage"—through some *misapprehension* as to what will be their sufferings of body or mind at that supreme moment.

"Why should we start and fear to die?  
What timorous worms we mortals are!  
Death is the gate of endless joy;  
And yet we dread to enter there."



O, if my Lord would come and meet,  
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,  
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,  
Nor feel the terrors as she passed.

Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on His breast I lean my head,  
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

3. While there is evidence abundant of the belief in a future state previous to the coming of Christ, it had not been clearly revealed that existence in that state had any certain connection with a resurrected body. Hence, the doctrine of the resurrection as taught by Christ and His apostles, was calculated to create in certain localities a profound sensation. It was to the masses a new and strange doctrine at which not a few *mocked*.

Nevertheless, it was and is the very keystone of the Gospel system: "For, if there be no resurrection, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Admitting the fact of a resurrection, and the time when the event will take place—*viz.*, at the end of the world—is not a matter in controversy. The event will be a universal one as it respects the dead. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." "There will be

a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust." "They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment."

In the order of the resurrection, "the dead in Christ shall rise first."

But the question which greatly interests us, and which we are anxious to have solved, relates to the nature of the resurrection body.

All the perplexities that environ this subject, as well as all the objections urged against the doctrine itself, have appeared to arise from the mystery that shrouds this question—a question that has not been solved for us by competent authority, and is not likely to be.

Paul himself, discoursing upon the subject, says, "Behold I show you a *mystery*. We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump."

We do not expect to solve this mystery, or even relieve the subject of all its embarrassments. Yet something may be done to bring out more clearly what has been revealed, and so is no more a mystery. The perplexities felt re-

late principally to *the identity* of the resurrection body.

Granting that we live again, will it be in the same body from which the soul departs at death? or in a body that we had at some former period of our earthly existence? or in a body composed entirely of new elements? It is claimed, as fully proven by chemical analysis, that every human body is made up of not less than thirteen elementary substances, that never as yet have been decomposed, and are therefore designated simple substances. Will all these substances enter into the composition of the resurrection body? It has also been shown that the human body is constantly changing its elements. There is going on perpetually both composition and decomposition, renovation and decay. As a consequence of this perpetual change which affects the hardest bone and the most slender tissue, it is estimated, that the whole substance of every human body is changed at least once in seven years. So that a man who has lived forty-nine years, has had at least seven wholly distinct bodies, and as many different bodies as there have been changes in the particles. Which one out of these seven wholly distinct, or these seventy

times seven or more different bodies, is to be the resurrection body? It is also maintained, that when the body reverts to dust, it is dissolved into its original elements, and that these elements again enter into the combination of other bodies. And the question arises, how are the bodies of all the generations of men that have lived and died on the earth, to reappear in the twinkling of an eye, when they must have become blended with an infinitude of other organized matter, and when the particles which compose them must be subject to conflicting claims.

In reply to these perplexing inquiries, it may be said: 1. That, whatever may be necessary to the *fit compounding of the body of the resurrection, is a possible thing with God*. "If God be almighty, if He can create at all, if He can bring a single atom of matter from the abyss of nothingness into existence, it must certainly be difficult to set any limits to His power. If He had only to speak and the confusion of chaos was hushed, and the world itself arose in all its order, and beauty, and grandeur, then surely there is nothing impossible in the doctrine that all the millions who now or hereafter shall sleep in the dust of death, will spring to life again, by the interposition of that same power which



hung the earth in empty space, and kindled up the sun and the stars. If God, at the beginning, collected the materials, and formed the first human pair so that they came in perfection from His hands; if He fixed the conditions or law, by which the successive generations should rise and depart from the world; then, in that very act of creation, are all the wonders and all the mysteries, and no more, which are found in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead."\*

As a result, the resurrection must be referred to the direct intervention of God's power, or as the apostle expresses it: "The working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

(2) Conceding to God the possibility of using His power to raise the dead, shall we attempt to decide for Him, which body, of all those wherein at various periods the human soul has dwelt, shall be the resurrection body; or, which of all the ingredients of those bodies shall be summoned back to constitute the body that shall come forth from the dust of the earth? Shall we even insist that any single ingredient, which has entered into its composition previous to death, shall go to the making-up of the res-

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\*Bil. Sac. 1860.

urrection body, provided its identity is preserved? Surely, this is not more necessary than that its composition now, should be the same as seven years ago. If it has not lost its identity by the complete change it has undergone in seven years, why should it in any it may undergo previous to the resurrection?

Nor does it affect its identity that it is now composed of particles which, at some time, have gone toward the make-up of a hundred other human bodies—bodies, it may be, of men still living.

Neither the Scriptures, if we rightly apprehend them, nor the common belief of Christians, asserts any closer identity between the present and future body than exists between the body in early manhood and the body in extreme old age.

If now it be granted, that no greater change takes place between death and the resurrection than between these two periods, then all is granted that the case requires.

Identity of body demands *a sameness in the arrangement of the particles which constitute it, rather than in a sameness of the particles.* Wherefore, if in the resurrection God shall respect the arrangement of particles, we see not why the body may not be the same, though

composed entirely of new particles. Such an arrangement would answer all the purposes of recognition. In such a body every man would, notwithstanding all changes, be conscious of his own identity.

And just here, it becomes necessary to admit an additional consideration. A radical change takes place in the body at the resurrection; the same change, no doubt, that takes place in the bodies of the saints who are alive on the earth when Christ comes. "Thou fool," says Paul in his argument with those who were cavilling on this subject, "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest *not that body which shall be*, . . . but God hath given it a body as it hath pleased Him. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

It may be, as some have suggested, that the material elements which now compose our bodies may exist in other forms—they may exist in a gaseous form, and in that form may become a component part of the spiritual body; and the chemical decomposition of the body in the grave may be only a part of the process by which the materials are changed while the identity remains. But this is hypothesis only.

Scripture is altogether silent on the subject.

Admitting this change, whatever it may be, as a new element to be reckoned with, and all our reasonings from premises which assume any more than identity of form, must be unreliable; and any objection based on such an assumption, must fall to the ground.

It is, undoubtedly, better for us not to be wise above what is written on this subject. And as God, in His wisdom, has revealed only the essential attributes of the body that shall be, it may be presumed that these revealings are all that, in our present state, we could comprehend of that body, and all that would be of practical service to those who believe in Jesus, who styles Himself, *the* Resurrection and the Life. It is quite enough for us to be assured that if He lives, they who believe in Him shall live also.

Before proceeding to the brief consideration of these attributes, it should be noted, that the apostle's description applies especially to the resurrected body of the righteous.

(1) This body is to be *incorruptible*. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." The tendency to disintegration and decay in every vein, artery, nerve, muscle of

and yet they all will have a body fashioned *like* His.

(4) The resurrection body of the saints will be *spiritual*. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Confessing that we know but little of the composition of a spiritual body—but little of the scope of its activities and its capacity for blessedness—yet, we know at least this much, that it will have no more need of the things upon which the natural body is dependent. It will be forever relieved of those cares and anxieties which are the occasion of that groaning within ourselves, of which the apostle speaks, while waiting for the adoption, to wit, "the redemption of our body."

The resurrection of the bodies of the saints in the manner and form set forth, will be an event of amazing magnitude and interest, as standing by itself—an event which, as revealing the power and grace of God, will be wholly without a parallel in the annals of the race. But the event will have a significance as being the climax of victory. It will complete the triumph of Christ over all His enemies. Not until after the resurrection will He have put all things

under Him. But, when He has freed Death's captive millions, even to the last man, then will He cease from His mediatorial reign, and will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that has put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

The resurrection will also complete the triumph of the saints. Not until they hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth from their graves, can they sing the peans of victory. But, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory."

4. It is ever to be borne in mind that the last book of the Scripture canon, is—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."

John, the apostle, was not responsible for the contents of the book. He was to act as the amanuensis of Jesus Christ, writing what He bade him write—no more, no less. If we find therein, through frequent allusion, special stress

laid on any one phase of truth, it is Jesus Christ who laid that stress, and His purpose in doing so is not to be called in question. It was needful, that He should set forth, in startling phrase, His own relations to men, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.'

In preparing the way for, and in order to justify the emphasis laid on the one feature of the general theme, to which earnest attention will be invited, there will be given, without note or comment, what is written of the Lamb-nature of Jesus Christ as it is to be disclosed in the hereafter.

"And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. . . . And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell *down before the Lamb*, . . . and they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seal thereof: *for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood*, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. and we shall reign on the earth." (5: 6, 7.) "And I heard the voice

of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: . . . saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain*, to receive power, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." (5: 11-12.)

"And I saw when *the Lamb opened one of the seals*. . . . And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from *the wrath of the Lamb*: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (6: 1, 15-17.)

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds, and people, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried, saying, with a loud voice, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb*."

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.



And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, *and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* Therefore are they before the throne, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them or any heat. For *the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne* shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (7:9-17.)

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by *the blood of the Lamb*, and by the word of their testimony." (12:10, 11)

"And I looked, and lo, *a Lamb stood on Mount Zion*, and with Him an hundred and four thousand. . . . These are they which follow *the Lamb* whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.*" (14:1-4.)

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"If any man worship the beast and his image . . . he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, *and in the presence of the Lamb.*" (14: 9, 10.)

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, *and the song of the Lamb*, saying, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." (15: 3.)

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him; *for the marriage of the Lamb is come*, and His wife hath made herself ready. And He said unto me write, Blessed are they which are called unto *the marriage supper of the Lamb.*" (19: 7-9.)

"Come hither, I will show you the bride, *the Lamb's wife.* . . .

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of *the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*" . . .

"And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and *the Lamb are the temple of it.* . . .

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, *and the Lamb is the light thereof.*" (21: 9, 14, 22.)

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, *proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*"

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God *and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.*" (22: 1, 3.)

In view of these marvelous revealings by Jesus Christ respecting His own relations to the work of human redemption at its final consummation, for the which we can in no wise account save on the supposition that He had a fore-view of the *peril* lying in this direction—a peril to which the Christian Church in these latter days is eminently exposed—it is surely a matter of superlative importance, to learn what our attitude may be toward this series of revealings, but more especially towards what is said, in close connection, of The Lamb's Book of Life—a book exclusively under His control—no one else having access to it, either to record therein a new name, or to erase a name already written there.

Our attitude toward this book will not alter the certainty of its existence, or the nature of its contents, but it may indicate something as

to the probability of our names being found therein.

If the thought of Christ's absolute control of the book and its contents—determining, from His personal knowledge, what names are entitled to a place there—is disagreeable; or, if the revealings wherein the Lamb is seen to occupy the highest place, and to perform the most important functions in the heavenly world, excites in their minds bitterness, and provokes hostile demonstrations, then the presumption is that their names are not in His book of life.

On five several occasions, the existence and purpose of this Lamb's book of life is recognized.

First, in the message to the Church in Sardis: "And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels." (Rev. 3: 5.)

Next, in the vision of the beast—with absolute power over all that dwell on the earth, whose names are *not* written in the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (13: 8.)

Again, in the vision of the resurrection, when John saw the dead small and great stand before

God; "and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life" (20: 12.), and near the close of the vision (20: 15.), when, "whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire."


And yet again, when in the vision of the New Jerusalem, into which nothing that defiled, worked abomination, or made a lie, was allowed entrance, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (21: 27.) In that day, that dreadful day, it will be small consolation to remember that our names were inscribed on the rolls of earthly distinction, or on monuments of brass or marble.

On that day, what comfort will not the assurance that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, give us? But before the coming of that day, what would we not give to *know* that our names are in that book? Would it not be well to apply to Christ in this behalf before it is too late, entreating Him to write our names therein, and give us the blessed assurance that it is done? There may be more names in His book of life than we imagine; but should our names be left out we are forever undone. He always knew during His earthly ministry, when,

at the touch of faith, virtue had gone out of Him; and as He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, why should not our faith lay hold on Him for some token that we have not applied to Him in vain? Why should He not say to us, "Go in peace"? Let us hope for nothing less of "Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." (Eph. 3: 20.)


5. Tradition has it, that near the opening of the fifteenth century, three theological students, of whom the youngest was Thomas à Kempis, afterward the author of that famous volume, "The Imitation of Christ," were interrogated by their preceptor, as to the most attractive feature of the heavenly world, as set forth in the Revelation. The eldest of the three, answering said, "To me it is the fact that there is no *death* in that world." The next younger replied, "There shall be no *night* there." Then spake Thomas à Kempis, "And His servants shall serve Him there."

We have seen that, in this lower world, there never was a safer suggestion as to the true ideal of the Christian life, than that it consisted chiefly in service rendered to Christ. And



whether that service is in this world or in the next is quite immaterial.

To one enamored of Christ's service, finding in it his highest delight—one who, having been trained in it and for it, has acquired facility in doing the things that are pleasing to Him—a barring out from the privilege of serving Him in the next world, would, from the standpoint of our earthly experience, seem like a great privation. And the privation would be greater because, in that world we are to encounter no such hindrances from our own infirmities or from the infirmities of others, as render our service here difficult and unsatisfactory even when we are at our best, and are doing our best. We would be glad to show our adorable Lord how willingly and well we can serve Him when clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us here being laid aside forever. We would be glad to have Him see how swiftly we can run the way of His commandments, when our hearts are enlarged by the experiences of the heavenly world. We shall, probably, discover new ways of serving Him in that world, yet we will readily fall into line with any new variety of service, and will be all the



more facile in doing the things required of us there, for the discipline we have had in doing for Him whatsoever our hands found to do here.

We have had glimpses of what goes on in heaven, especially in the line of spontaneous and exultant worship. We have also had clear intimations as to the errands upon which some of the sainted dead are sent, in the incidents of the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah were in evidence, and in the interviewing of John by one who declared: "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets." Why not other of the great company of the sainted dead be similarly employed?

Is it not something more than inference we are permitted to draw from the revealed fact, that angels "are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them that shall be the heirs of salvation"? If angels, why not at least an occasional representative from the ranks of spirits of just ones made perfect?

While therefore, it may be truly said, that we know next to nothing as to the manner and amount of service in which our ransomed powers may be suitably and usefully employed, yet we are quite sure we shall find enough to

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do, and all in the most agreeable lines of service; and that eternity will be none too long for all we may hope to achieve for Him who is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

6. The one thing that most distresses us in this world is our conscious *imperfection*. In many things we are ever coming short, not only of the requirements of God's holy law, but of our own ideals. Though justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and hoping in the mercy of God, yet we continually fear lest a promise being left us of entering into heavenly rest, we shall actually come short.

We never are so established in the way of righteousness as not, with alarming frequency, to fall under condemnation; and we ask with deep solicitude, if this must always continue—if we are never in this world to have our goings established.

To be sure, we know that He is able to keep us from falling, but still we are not kept. With the vast majority of Christians this cause of worriment continues through life, and they ask with intense anxiety, whether there can ever be in them any meetness for the inheritance of the

saints in light. And, if they should ever be so happy as to gain admission to heaven, what assurance have they that all the evil propensities with which they are now contending, will be thoroughly and permanently eradicated?

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in contrasting the Christian with the Hebrew economy, showing the vast superiority of the former, calls special attention to the provision made for a permanent abiding-place and its holy associations. "Ye are come," as if they had already arrived there, "to the city of the heavenly Jerusalem of the living God; and to the myriads, the joyful company of angels; and to the assembly of the first born enrolled in heaven; and to the Judge, the God of all, and to *the spirits of the just made perfect*; and to the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus; and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better than Abel."

Surely, there could be no better place, or a more exalted and glorious citizenship.

We take it, that the spirits of the just made perfect, here referred to, are the spirits of those *justified* while in this world, by faith in Jesus Christ; for, there are no other just ones.

It is not for us to say, perhaps it is not for us

to know, when and where this perfecting of the justified takes place; but we are assured that it must take place sometime, and somewhere.

Nor yet, may we be able to comprehend how much is involved in the perfecting *process*—how far we may be advanced in holiness, or in the accurate knowledge of spiritual things, and whether provision is made for limitless growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, the same in that world as in this.


Neither may we be able to trace the perfecting process, determining whether it is a gradual or instantaneous change. A gracious change it must be, in which God acts in a sovereign way, very much, perhaps, as He acts in the changing of our vile bodies and “fashioning them like unto Christ’s glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.”

But that which we *may* know, the knowledge of which may well fill our souls with great joyfulness, is the revealed fact, that, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, are found the spirits of the just, made perfect by some process so gracious and so effectual that the subjects of it will nevermore fall away from their steadfast loyalty to God. And when, at

length, the last link in the golden chain that unites us to the heavenly world is supplied—calling having succeeded predestination, justification calling, glorification justification—the work of redemption in us will stand forever sure. Then, with rapture, we will exclaim: “Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth’s sake.” (Psa. 115: 1.)

7. In the prayer offered by Christ, on the same night in which He was betrayed, was a double petition, in respect to the *future* of His disciples, in which he prays not only for those constituting His first following, but for all that shall believe on Him through their word. Hence, the prayer itself is a most precious heirloom of the Christian Church—the heritage of believers to the end of time. In it is expressed Christ’s importunate wish as to their *place* of abode, and *the feature of privilege* that will most distinguish their blissful experiences there.

“I will that they also be with Me *where I am.*” And where is Christ? When He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of human sight, whither went He? To the disciples He had just said: “I came forth from



the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father." And to the Father He said, "Now I am no more in the world, . . . I come to Thee." And where is the Father, if not in that place which we call heaven? But, call it what we will, the place where Christ is with the Father. must be a glorious place—the place above all others, where every disciple would surely wish to be. It is the earnest desire of Christ that all whom the Father hath given Him, as they pass within the veil, should be *with Himself*. And such a desire necessarily implies

1st. A meetness for the high and holy associations to which they are introduced; for it is quite insupposable that any being could be admitted to such associations without holiness. Christ could not offer to the Father such an affront as would be involved in a request to admit to the heavenly places those in whom there remained the slightest taint of ungodliness.

2d. Those whom He would so distinguish, are themselves most anxious to be with Him where He is. That which to them renders a residence in heaven especially desirable, is the fact that Christ is there. Most sincerely and earnestly, no doubt, every one whom the Father

has given to Christ, wishes that his kindred and friends should be with him in heaven; but he would sooner be parted from them than be separated from Christ. *He* is "the chiefest among ten thousands, and the one altogether lovely." Heaven without Him would have lost its chief attraction. A correspondent, detailing the incidents of the death-bed experiences of one of the saintliest of women who have passed away from earth, says: "Sometimes she would tell us how heaven seemed, declaring that her joy at the thought of that world, was that she should see Jesus there." Her husband, a godly minister, and a child in the bloom of young womanhood, had gone on before, but these friends did not stand foremost at heaven's gate. "I shall see the Lord in His glory," was her exclamation, as she entered the river.

And so we come to *the feature of privilege*, that will most distinguish the blissful experience of those who are with Christ in the long hereafter—" *That they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me.*" In a preceding paragraph, Christ speaks of "the glory He had with the Father, before the world was."

It is aside from our object to inquire in what sense the Father gives the Son His glory. Our

concern is, to arrive at some just conception of the preciousness of the privilege involved in seeing that, now that Christ has come into possession of it. Its preciousness must necessarily depend upon the magnificence of the vision. Had we ever beheld this vision, we might find ourselves under constraint as was Paul after he had been caught up into Paradise, and had heard unspeakable words which it was not lawful for him to repeat.

It is simply impossible to outline the glory of Christ, as it will be revealed to us when we shall have passed within the veil. Nevertheless, there are certain things, which in the very nature of the case, it may be presumed, must enter into its composition as inseparable elements.

(1) It is the glory of a *venerable antiquity*. Christ is older than the creation. He had a glory which he shared with His Father before the world was—a glory, it may be, that was indistinguishable from the glory of the Father, there being, as yet, no occasion for such distinction. There are monuments of the past, hoary with age, which we approach with awe; and yet, we cannot just tell what so impresses us, unless it be the glory of the antique.

When we behold Christ in His glory, we shall doubtless recognize in Him "the Ancient of Days," whom Daniel saw, "clothed in a snow-white garment, with the hair of His head like pure wool, sitting upon a throne like the fiery flame, with thousand thousands ministering unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him."

(2) Christ's glory is the glory of *boundless power, regulated by infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace*—a power adequate not only to the creation of a world, but to its redemption. "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."

A man of genius—architect, sculptor, painter—is glorified by his works. As seen in the midst of what his hands have wrought, he is the object of a world's admiration. We instinctively uncover in his presence. Even so, the works of Christ declare His glory. As seen in the midst of them, with all the reins of control converging toward Him, with His hand pressing all the springs of human activity and



influence, controlling the instincts of the animal kingdom, stimulating the growth and fruitfulness of the vegetable world with the whole creation accepting the bounty of His providence, and feeding at His board—His glory is an appreciable fact. All this glory belonged to Him by virtue of His creative act. It was a part of the glory He had with the Father before He essayed to redeem fallen humanity—a work of love, which, if successful, will prove “the glory that excelleth.”

And, without doubt, Christ has succeeded and will more fully succeed in working out the redemption of lost men.

The glory of the Creator in the midst of His works pales amid the greater glory of that same Creator as He stands amid the garnered fruits of redemption, and receives the honors paid Him by the multitudes who cast their crowns at His feet. Undertaking a task environed with stupendous difficulties, He completes it. Bringing forth the capstone thereof amid shoutings of “grace, grace, unto it,” He exclaims: “I have finished the work that was given me to do.”

(3) Christ’s glory is the glory of a *realized enthronement* “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every

name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

The surroundings of no earthly throne are to be compared with the august appointments of Christ's royal estate. He is the grand focal center of all the converging rays of light that illumine with their effulgence the city where there is no night, and no need of candle, or light of the sun. The three disciples, at the transfiguration, saw His face "shining as the sun, and his raiment white and glistening."

John saw Him, subsequently, in the vision of the seven golden candlesticks, "clothed in a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

No wonder that John at the sight fell at His feet as one dead. As if to reassure him by asserting His own identity, while not subtracting anything from the glory and the terrible

majesty which had so overpowered him, this awe-inspiring Being laid His right hand upon His servant, saying unto him: "Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive forevermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Taking all these representations into the account, we must believe that beneath the figures of speech, there is a reality of meaning in the enthronement of Christ that passes all human conception.

(4) The glory of Christ is the glory of *impressive, spontaneous and accordant worship*, paid Him by all the host of heaven. If we have been thrilled and uplifted by the worship of a few thousands mingling their voices in one common song of praise—if we have spoken of such worship as grand and glorious, notwithstanding there was more or less of discord to impair the sweetness of the melody—Oh! how glorious will be the anthems that rise, and swell, and reverberate amid the arches of the heavenly sanctuary—anthems in which there will be mingled not one discordant note, and in the chorus of which the voices of unnumbered millions will be joined—anthems the burden of which will be the person and work of Jesus

Christ, the Lamb that was slain, and liveth again.

Such is the glory, in four of its principal elements, which Christ desires those whom the Father hath given Him, and who are to be with Him where He is, should behold, believing they will account that the highest privilege appertaining to the state of blessedness upon which they will enter when they have passed within the veil.

Many persons have, as we well know, gone long distances, to witness some royal pageant wherein a prince of the blood was the central figure. And they have been filled with enthusiasm, as they feasted their eyes upon the unwonted spectacle wherein the tinsel and the glitter preponderated—where, perhaps, there was more of baseness than of true royalty. Who then, when the heavenly gates are lifted up, and the pageant of Christ's glory is revealed to the countless throng that have reached the celestial city, would not wish to be there? or, being there, who would not exult at his privilege, joining with rapturous enthusiasm in the acclamations that, like the voice of many waters, greet the exalted and glorified One?

But, it must evermore be remembered that the glory of Christ is greatly height-

ened by contrast. The subjects of redemption have seen Him amid surroundings of great humiliation, divested of all the glory He had with the Father; have seen Him in the attire, and fulfilling the offices of a servant; have seen Him without place to lay His head; have seen Him with only the most meager and irresolute following; have seen Him led as a lamb to the slaughter, crucified between two thieves, and dying as a malefactor.

They have also seen Him wounded in the house of His friends; they have seen His cause languishing; they have seen multitudes siding against Him, and willing to believing anything prejudicial to His fame.

Ah! what a contrast do they now behold between the Son of man from whom, in His humiliation, judgment was taken away, and the same Son of man, coming in His glory, attended by all the holy angels, sitting upon the throne of His glory with all nations gathered before Him, separating them one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats!

And, to a noble, large-hearted, loving being, what could be more natural than the desire to exhibit to those who, attracted to Himself by

no outward state, had attached themselves to His person and cause, the other side—the *glorious* side.

A mere earthly friendship would suggest this. Eminently fitting is it, that the love and the loyalty which have been tested amid circumstances of deepest humiliation and distress, and have not been found wanting, should have both recognition and reward when circumstances are changed.

A mighty prince, traveling *incog.* in some remote province of his empire, puts off his princely habit, and, attired as a common man, with no attendance, with no resources at his immediate command, as poor apparently as the poorest of his subjects, becomes, nevertheless, an object of interest to some who befriend him, ministering to his necessities, espousing his cause, and enduring reproach for his sake. How natural for such a prince, when he has come again into his kingdom, to wish that these persons might see him in his glory, with all the state and magnificence which are his regal privilege. How delighted he would be to witness their wonder and transports as they enter into the joy—the triumphant joy of their rightful sovereign.

Even so Christ will, we believe, find a real pleasure in welcoming to His presence, and in revealing the glories of His person and kingdom to those who have loved, and trusted, and served Him on earth; to those who have stood up for Him, bearing reproach and suffering shame for His sake. He will take real pleasure in disclosing to them more and more fully the glorious facts appertaining to the scheme of redemption, of which His humiliation, sufferings, and death were the essential conditions—facts which they believed only in part because they saw them through a glass dimly.

Now, it is assumed, as in the matter of being with Christ, so also in this matter of seeing His glory, that the desire on His part, to show certain ones His glory, is met by a corresponding desire on their part to see that glory—a desire more intense and absorbing than the desire to see the form of some glorified saint. Not to have this desire paramount, argues serious lack in those who are looking for an abundant entrance into His heavenly kingdom.

There is something wondrously and touchingly kind in this expression of Christ's will, as it regards those who are so often oppressed with a keen sense of their natural unworthiness,

and are in many respects truly unworthy, yet are sincerely attached to His person and cause. It bespeaks such an appreciation of what is good in them, of the kindness they have shown Him, of the confidence they repose in Him, of their willingness to be identified with His cause and to suffer shame for His sake. They may be ignorant and unrefined; they may be sunken very low in the squalor of poverty; they may be the merest wrecks of what they would have been but for their past viciousness; they may be cast out from the companionships of their fellow men; and yet they are embraced among the redeemed ones whom Christ desires to be with Himself and to behold His glory. Is there not in this something wondrously kind?

What comfort this phase of truth is calculated to afford the disciple who is about taking leave of this world, and the Christian friends from whom he must be parted for a little season. He is going to be with Christ, and be with Him where He is; and is about to behold His glory. How evident then is it that his condition is to be greatly bettered by an exchange of worlds.

It should excite no wonder that he should desire to make the exchange, that he should long for the hour of his full and final discharge



from all his earthly engagements, assured as he is with the apostle to the Gentiles, that it is *gain* for him to die. And if he is so much the gainer, why should we be so overwhelmed with sorrow at his departure? We should not even *seem* to mourn as those who have no hope—mourn with a bitterness of spirit, that often cannot be distinguished from heart-rebellion. Rating next to the privilege of being with Christ and beholding His glory may be the privilege of being associated with an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and seeing their glory; but the one great luminary of heaven, the Sun of righteousness, will evermore retain His place as the grand center of all the light, and glory, and bliss of the celestial country.



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